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Bentley in 1878.





COMIC SKETCHES

AND

RECOLLECTIONS.

BY JOHN POOLE, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "PAUL PRY," ETC.

SECOND EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED FOR HENRY COLBURN.

1843.



MARY WOOD
OLIVER
VIAZELLI

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S K E T C H E S
AND
R E C O L L E C T I O N S.

THE LATE MR. TARDY.

“*BETTER late than never*” was the motto of that ancient family, the Tardys : that of the Loiters was “*Slow and sure*. ”

The deceased Sir Dawdlemore Tardy, of Neverdone Castle, Bart., father to our present subject, married Miss Evelina Loiter, sole offspring of Sir Lag Loiter, Bart., of Limpingham Hall. Certain trifling circumstances appeared to render this marriage desirable — such as equality of rank, contiguity of the family estates, the mutual affection which had long existed

between the principal contracting parties, the fitness of their ages, the conformity of their habits, tastes, and dispositions, &c. &c. Yet, maturely considered, a more injudicious union can hardly be imagined ; for what, indeed, but the most disastrous consequences could be expected to result from the junction, not of the families, but of their mottoes !

In the formation of character, the operation of a precept frequently repeated, though imperceptible, is certain ; and no one will venture to dispute that a person who can scarcely ever step into his carriage, or seal a letter, without finding the same maxim obtruded upon his attention, will insensibly become its slave. How much, then, must the case of such a one be aggravated, when abandoned to the influence of *two* such monitors, both pointing the same way ! Had either of the two families had for their motto, “ *Delays are dangerous,*” or, “ *Strike while the iron’s hot,*” or, “ *A stitch in time saves nine,*” or, “ *Never put off till to-morrow that which can be done to-day*”—though, haply, somewhat too long, or not sufficiently elegant to decorate the panels of a carriage—the counteracting influence of one of these sentences would have neutralized the mis-

chievous effects of either of the others. As it was, the operation of their combined force was irresistible ; and of their pernicious power the unfortunate victim was the late Loiter Lag Tardy, Esquire.

The Genius of Delay seems to have presided over the fortunes of our hero even before his entrance into this world of trouble.

Anxiously awaited by Sir Dawdlemore and his young and lovely wife was the period which should bless them with what is prettily termed a pledge of affection. The tenantry, also, of the two families felt a deep and natural interest in the event, for (to say nothing of the love and respect which they entertained for their landlords) the birth of a child was to be celebrated by the roasting of a couple of fat oxen, and the distribution of sundry barrels of very strong ale. The heads of the most learned gossips of the village of Limpingham were at work ; signs and appearances were carefully considered ; time was strictly calculated ; and, at length, by a general concurrence of opinions, the eighth of September was declared the favoured and fortunate day which the young stranger would most certainly honour with his first interesting squeak.

The important eighth of September arrived. Certain symptoms experienced by Lady Tardy seemed likely to confirm the opinions of the old ladies of Limpingham. The ale-barrels were rolled out upon the lawn of Neverdone Castle, the fatted oxen were turned from their pastures, the ropes of the church-bells of Limpingham were already in the hands of the most expert ringers in the village, and nothing remained wanting to put all these evidences of heart-felt rejoicing into appropriate action, but the pre-concerted signal from the Castle, which was to announce, incontestably, an addition to the family. But the old ladies of Limpingham were for once at fault ; and the eighth of September was disappointed of its expected honours, for the little Tardy appeared not on that day. So the bell-ringers returned to their homes, the ale-barrels were restored to their shed, and the fatted oxen to their pastures.

Another day passed away, and another ; a week, a fortnight, elapsed, yet was the world ungladdened by the addition of the expected, the invaluable, unit to its hundreds of millions.

“Slow and sure,” said Sir Lag Loiter.

“Better late than never,” responded his patient son-in-law.

At last—at last—at last, on the twenty-ninth of September, (exactly twenty-one days *after* the period calculated upon,) at precisely nine of the morning, a red flag, hoisted on one of the turrets (*chimney-tops?*) of Neverdone Castle, gave assurance of the birth of an heir-male to the house of Tardy.

All was now rejoicing ! The bells of Limpingham Church were set ringing, the ale-barrels were rolled out to be tapped, the oxen were driven forth to be slaughtered.

We have already said that the Genius of Delay seems to have presided over the fortunes of our hero, even (if such an expression be allowable) before his birth. His first step in the world, or, more strictly speaking, the very step he took into existence, was taken *too late* ! The young gentleman whose appearance we have announced was *not* Master Loiter Lag Tardy !

Barely had a quarter of an hour passed away, (for Sir Dawdlemore Tardy and Sir Lag Loiter were still shaking hands, and congratulating each other upon the happy event,) when the nurse burst into the room, and announced the arrival of a *second* pledge of affection ! This *was* our hero. Call it indolence ; call it politeness towards his fellow-brat, whom he allowed

to take the start of him ; qualify his conduct upon the occasion in whatsoever way you please ; certain it is that, by coming into the world just a quarter of an hour too late, he lost a baronetcy, with two-and-thirty thousand a year, and took in exchange the advantageous place of younger brother, with a magnificent three hundred whilst his father lived, and the chances of what afterwards the generosity of the person whom he had so kindly obliged might choose, on his acceding to the title and estates, to bestow upon him.

The overjoyed father (whose delight, however, was somewhat diminished by receiving more than he had bargained for) was naturally anxious to feast his eyes with a sight of the future baronet and his brother. Accordingly, two little lumps of something resembling brick-dust-coloured putty, but which the nurse assured him were really the parties in question, were brought for his inspection. Not greater could have been his wonder and his admiration had a phœnix and a unicorn been exhibited to him. Apparently forgetting that such things are by no means uncommon, he gazed upon them as though they were the rarest productions of nature ; and, (like the bird we have alluded

to) only to be met with once in a century. But the first-felt raptures of paternity must be treated with indulgence.

“Do you consider them handsome, nurse?” asked he, in a tone sufficiently indicating that *he* did—at the same time putting a couple of guineas into the hand of the matron.

“They are positively the most beautiful creatures I ever beheld, sir,” replied she; adroitly adding, “and so like you and my lady!”

She then expatiated on the several charms of the things; declaring a small pimple in the centre of what she pretended was the *face* of our hero—[having no business with his brother, we shall make no further mention of *him*]—to be the very nose of her ladyship; and a gimlet-hole just below it to be Sir Dawdlemore’s own mouth.

But, however well-founded may have been the nurse’s encomium on the beauty of the little gentleman, certain it is that that beauty was not destined to be of long duration.

At the period when Mr. Tardy came into the world, that scourge of society, that foe to the quiet and comfort of mankind, the barbarous and ever-to-be-execrated Jenner, had not yet promulgated his fatal discovery of the means

of counteracting that admirable contrivance for preserving the earth from being overrun with scrubby, screaming children — namely, the small-pox. Then did that invaluable disease walk unimpeded through the blind alleys and the crooked lanes, in one week beneficently sweeping away a greater number of the “little unwashed” than the combined industry of war, plague, pestilence, and famine, could in a month exterminate.

One morning the nurse entered the breakfast-parlour, and, with consternation painted on her countenance, informed the baronet and his lady that four cases of small-pox, in its most virulent form, had just then appeared in the immediate neighbourhood of the Castle !

At this awful intelligence the baronet and his lady looked aghast.

“What *is* to be done, nurse?” inquired Lady Tardy.

“O, my lady,” replied nurse, “the dear baby ought to be inoculated immediately; and I have told your ladyship so for this month past.”

“Slow and sure, nurse,” rejoined her ladyship; “I don’t think the child is in condition for the operation.”

"O, my lady," continued nurse, "an angel from heaven wouldn't be fitter to be inoculated. We can never be too early in these matters; and, with my will, it should have been done yesterday."

"Better late than never," said Sir Dawdlemore; "it shall be done to-morrow."

On the evening of the very day when this short though important conversation occurred, the unfortunate little Loiter took the disease naturally. It was a case of the most malignant character, and, for a long time, the state of the little sufferer seemed hopeless. However, he recovered; but (thanks to the family motto of the Tardys!) the beauty of his "human face divine" was obliterated for ever.

To recount the instances of young Tardy's failures and mishaps in his boyish days, through his indolent habit of procrastination, were endless. Was a school-prize to be contended for, his exercise, which was never deficient in merit, was always *nearly* ready about the time when it should have been delivered in; yet never finished, or not presented, till just a quarter of an hour after the period when it could be received. Did he join a marauding party in an orchard, his companions would scamper away

on the first alarm of detection, whilst he, too indolent to run for it, would be caught, and bear the punishment due to the whole party. Was he a candidate for a prize in a rowing-match or a pony-race, the slow-and-sure maxim would still prevail. “Where’s the good of doing things in a hurry?” he would ask: and when, as a natural consequence of his “taking it easy,” he came in just in time to lose (as he invariably did,) and his successful rival sneeringly welcomed him with “a *leetle* too late, Tardy”—he would console himself for the loss of both money and reputation by quoting the family motto—“Well—better late than never.”

His education finished, it became necessary to consider the means of establishing him in life. But what could be done for the poor fellow? The joint fortunes of the Tardys and the Loiters amounted, it is true, to two-and-thirty thousand a-year; but this, together with the title, was, very properly, destined to illustrate the career of the elder brother. Loiter thought this hard; and once, when his settlement was the subject of discussion, he ventured to express such an opinion to Sir Dawdlemore.

“Now I ask you, my dear father, as a man

who knows what life is, what *can* I do with the three hundred a-year you allow me?"

"Really, my dear boy, that's a very perplexing question."

"Now, sir, do you think *you* could live upon three hundred a-year?"

This question being little less perplexing than the other, the baronet hemm'd, and ha'd, and hesitated, and at length replied :

"Why—aw—no—I—aw—candidly speaking, I don't think I could : but you see—aw—I never was a younger brother, but—aw—if I had been, I suppose I must have contrived as well as I could with it—and—aw—that's what you must do—aw—don't you see?"

"But, surely, father, out of an income of two-and-thirty thousand pounds something might ——"'

"That's nothing to the point, Loiter ; be reasonable, and remember that your elder brother will have to maintain the dignity of our name—and that—aw—nothing short of two-and-thirty thousand a-year—aw—will do it—whilst you, for your part—aw—having no responsibilities in the world—aw—can easily——"

"Then, sir," warmly exclaimed Loiter, "I

must say I consider it a cruel injustice that I should be turned forth a beggar, simply because in our race into the world my brother happened to beat me by half a neck."

"And I must say, sir," with equal warmth retorted Sir Dawdlemore, "I consider your complaint to be both unjust and absurd: you have no one to thank for that but yourself: why did you let him?" So saying, he angrily left the room.

In about half an hour he returned.

"Come, Loiter," said he, "give me your hand. Although I can do nothing for you myself, I have not been negligent of you. Your fortune is made. By my interest at the India-House, I have procured a writership for you. I have been long trying for this, but wouldn't let you know it till I could tell you I had succeeded. Read this letter."

The delighted Loiter Lag Tardy read:—

"East India House, 13th February, 179—"

"Why, sir," said Loiter, "this letter is dated exactly ten days ago!"

"Yes, my dear boy; but slow and sure: sending a beloved son to India is, after all, a serious affair, and ought not to be too hastily determined upon. But read on."

Loiter continued :—

“ My dear Sir Dawdlemore —

“ At length I have a nomination to a writership, which I shall be most happy to use in favour of the son of so old and so valued a friend as you. But, *within three days of your receipt of this (AT THE VERY LATEST)* pray inform me whether you are now in the mind to accept it ; for (as you will readily believe) I am overwhelmed with applications for it — and one amongst them is from a CERTAIN PERSON whom it would be not a little to my interest to oblige.

“ Believe me, most faithfully your’s,

“ WALTER RICE CURRY.”

“ To Sir Dawdlemore Tardy, Bart.

“ Neverdone Castle,

“ Limpingham.”

“ Well, my boy,” exclaimed Sir Dawdlemore, exultingly, “ what say you to that ?”

“ My fortune is made, sir,” said Loiter ; “ and I am grateful for your remembrance of me.”

“ Now, then, Loiter — let me see — this is Monday the 23d ; write by to-night’s post to Sir Walter in acceptance of his offer ; to-morrow he will receive your letter, and on Wednes-

day, the 25th, we may expect an intimation of your appointment."

With his accustomed alacrity Loiter flew to his writing-case ; but, reflecting that, as it was now only two o'clock, and that the post did not leave Limpingham till a quarter past seven, he thought he might as well defer the task till after his morning's ride. Accordingly he mounted his horse, and rode his usual time ; and, on his return home, again flew to his writing-case. After taking from it seventeen unanswered letters (of which seven exhibited, in large characters, underscored, the appalling words, "Pray answer by return;" five, "Immediate;" and two, "Most pressing,") he thus commenced his missive to the director :—

" Dear Sir Wa——"

Having proceeded so far, he looked at his watch.

" Half-past five," thought he. " There will barely be time to write this letter, for in a little while it will be almost time to dress for dinner; so I'll just amuse myself during this useless quarter of an hour with my flute, and then dress, and then——." So he took up his flute, and continued *too-toeing* till the dressing-bell warned him to his room.

Having performed the important duties of the toilet, he resumed his letter to the director ; and, by a vigorous effort, he this time advanced so far as

“ Dear Sir Walt——”

At this particular moment, or, rather, at this particular letter, he recollects that his servant had omitted to give him a handkerchief ; so he rang the bell, which ring brought a servant who happened not to be his own, which servant was sent to send Ridgway ; when, after a slight delay, the said Ridgway came ; who, being told of the omission, went forthwith to supply it.

All this occupied time, during which Mr. Tardy paced up and down the room.

Presently Ridgway returned with intelligence that he could not open the drawer where the handkerchiefs were kept, something being the matter with the lock. Whereupon Mr. Tardy went himself to see what *could* be the matter with it ; and he, after peeping twenty times into the key-hole, and blowing forty times into the key, and thrusting it into the lock, and twisting it first one way and then another, at length found himself the victor in the struggle, and marched off with the spoils of conquest in the form of a cambric handkerchief.

Victories, however, are seldom gained but at some expense ; and the cost of this to our hero was exactly sixteen minutes of time and a writership in India.

He returned to his letter, but had scarcely taken up his pen when the dinner-bell was heard. In an emergency of this nature, however, dinner was an affair of minor consideration ; and soup, nay, even fish, might be sacrificed to a writership : so, spite of message after message from the dining-room, the energetic Loiter finished his letter and despatched a servant with it to Limpingham.

In the course of the evening word was brought that the letter had been sent just a quarter of an hour too late for that night's post, but that it would be forwarded on the morrow.

"I'm sorry for that," said Sir Dawdlemore ; "inasmuch as we cannot now expect an answer before the 26th."

"No matter, sir," replied Loiter ; "better late than never."

On the 26th the expected letter arrived. It ran thus :—

"E.I.H., 25th Feb.
"My dear Sir,

"It is with infinite regret I inform you that the writership in question is no longer in

my power to bestow. Your letter, *dated* the 23d, (which, consequently, ought to have arrived yesterday,) I have but this moment received. From a sincere wish that *you* should benefit by the appointment, I resolved to extend the *three* days I proposed for your consideration of my offer to *ten*. But, not hearing either from you or your father, I interpreted your silence on the subject into a rejection of the thing; and at last yielded to the pressing intreaties of my friend, Lord Snatchatall, that I would give it to his youngest son. What adds greatly to my mortification is the fact that, had your letter arrived even yesterday, the 24th, (which, agreeably to the date it bears, as I have already said, it ought to have done,) the appointment had still been your's; for it was not till last night that I nominated the Honourable Hungerford Snatchatall in your stead.

“ Believe me, my dear Sir,
“ Your's and your father's very sincere friend,
“ WALTER RICE CURRY.”
“ To Loiter L. Tardy, Esq.”

Reproaches from father to son very naturally ensued upon the reading of this epistle; and these terminated with —

"Well, sir, I have done for you all which I have it in *my* power to do. You have marred your fortune by your own fault, and must now try to mend it again in the best way you can."

But, as no one likes to bear blame which he can, by any means in the world, transfer to the shoulders of another, poor Ridgway was accused of being the primary cause of the mishap.

"Hadn't that rascal of mine, sir," said young Mr. Tardy, "kept me blowing into a key for a full quarter of an hour, I should have just saved the post by a minute."

So Ridgway was summoned into the room ; and, with a rapidity of execution not very common with the Tardys, the unfortunate valet was paid his wages and discharged.

Of the many methods of improving your fortune, or of acquiring one, the readiest, if not in all respects the most agreeable, is to marry an heiress. We will not venture to assert that this expedient frequently occurs to the minds of younger brothers, but that Mr. Tardy had thought of such a thing we are certain.

A few miles from the Castle there lived a gentleman of the name of Tubbs, who had "one fair daughter and no more." This young lady was the sole expectant of nearly four thousand

a-year. Young Tardy was a favourite with the father, and was not indifferently looked upon by his daughter, Clara. For, although Loiter was not handsome, (owing to the delay we have mentioned as having occurred at a very early period of his life,) yet did he possess recommendations sufficient to win the affections even of a woman beautiful and accomplished as was Miss Tubbs.

But the passport which gained him admission into the very citadel of her heart was his proficiency on the flute. This will be easily understood, when we explain that Clara was perfect mistress of the piano-forte, (at least, her father, who was a competent judge in the matter, thought so,) and that her chief delight was to play the "Battle of Prague," the "March in Blue-Beard," and the "Overture to Lodoiska"—(compositions much in vogue at the time in question, though, perhaps, not so frequently performed now as they deserve to be)—while Loiter would stand behind her, and swell the harmonies with the sounds of his attendant flute. There was but one drawback to the perfection of Mr. Tardy's performance—he was usually three or four bars *behind time*. This defect, being constitutional, could not be reme-

died ; and when, upon his concluding *too-too-too* coming in after the last touch of Clara Tubbs had ceased to vibrate, and she would exclaim, “ Charmingly played, Mr. Tardy !—only you are three bars too late ”—his reply was, as will be anticipated, “ Better late than never, Miss Tubbs.”

The growing intimacy between the young people did not pass unobserved either by Sir Dawdlemore and Lady Tardy or by old Mr. Tubbs himself. The Baronet encouraged it; for he really loved his younger son, and would have given any thing in the world to see him advantageously settled — except money. Nor is it unlikely that Mr. Tubbs would have consented to the marriage, had Loiter Tardy made a proposal to him for the hand of the fair Clara at about this time. But, notwithstanding that he was repeatedly urged by the young lady so to do, the slow-and-sure principle preponderated; till one day a formal offer was made for her by Squire Lumpy, a wealthy neighbour of Mr. Tubbs. Then it was that Mr. Tardy, conceiving there was no time to be lost, resolved upon an immediate explanation with the father of his beloved Clara.

“ I fear it is now too late,” said Miss Tubbs;

"had you declared yourself to my father before this abominable creature, with his five thousand a-year, came to put notions of aggrandizement into his head, I have reason to believe that—But, alas ! I fear it is now too late !"

"Fear nothing, my dear Clara," replied Tardy ; "better late than never."

And incontinently he proceeded to the library, where he found Mr. Tubbs, to whom he opened the business.

Having patiently listened to all that the young gentleman had to say, Mr. Tubbs thus replied :

"My dear Loiter, I like you ; and, to speak the plain truth, I should prefer you for a son-in-law to any man in the county, don't you see ? Had you asked me but yesterday, I would have given you my daughter, fortune and all, and never have thought about what you could bring on your side, don't you know ? But this offer of Squire Lumpy's has given a turn to the whole affair, you see. He has five thousand a-year, eh ? Clara will have four, won't she ? Five and four make nine, you know. Now, nine thousand a-year will make *something* of us in the county, you perceive ; and, as a considerate father, I am bound to look to my

child's welfare, and to do the best I can for her, and so forth, don't you understand? However, as I said before, I'd rather have you for my son-in-law, you know: so provided that—In short—to come to the point: suppose I were to give you my consent, what would your father give you, don't you see?"

"Why, sir," replied Loiter, "he would give me *his*: but, to deal honestly with you, I don't think he would give me any thing else."

"O!—ha!—Well, then, as that's the case, my dear boy, though you are a very good boy, and I like you, don't you know?—it will be better for all parties concerned that this should be your last visit at Tubbs' Hall, don't you perceive?"

"But, sir," exclaimed Loiter, "our hearts—our affections——"

"Fiddlesticks! don't you see? But, come; there's my hand, eh? And when Clara is married and safe at home with her husband, you may come and see me as often as you like, you understand—and bring your flute with you, don't you know? So, for the last time, good bye, don't you see?"

With this, Mr. Tubbs bowed his visiter out of the room.

Prior to Loiter's quitting the house, a short interview took place between the lovers. The state of their feelings no pen can describe ; but it may be tolerably well conceived from the fact that, in this interview—brief as indeed it was, for it lasted but five minutes—they not only resolved upon the desperate measure of eloping on the very next morning, but settled also the manner, place, and time.

"At four precisely, dear Loiter : be punctual!" were the last words of Clara Tubbs.

"To a second, beloved Clara," were Mr. Tardy's.

A chaise-and-four was ordered to be in waiting, just out of the village of Limpingham, on the London road, by three the next morning.

On the next morning, at a quarter before three, Mr. Tardy awoke. It was on the seventh of November. The morning was dark, cold, and drizzly.

"No more than a quarter to three ; and four is the time appointed by my darling Clara. I can take another turn," said the impatient lover.

The turret clock struck three. Tardy slowly arose, and peeped through the window-shutters.

"What an in-f-f-ernal m-m-morning!" muttered he, his teeth chattering with cold ; "no-

thing but the b-b-bliss of f-f-flying to meet one's b-b-beloved could reconcile a man to so barbarous a proceeding as leaving his comfortable bed. But I've a clear hour before me ; half an hour will serve to shave and dress ; a quarter will take me to the Little Park-Gate at Tubbs' Hall — by running very fast — and — come, I've a quarter of an hour to spare, and may as well enjoy *that*." So he got into his comfortable bed again.

The chimes sounded the quarter.

"Ugh ! I'll not shave ; that will save ten minutes." So he took another turn.

At half-past three he once more arose.

"Only half an hour to four," thought he : "no matter ; there's plenty of time ; four for half-after—half an hour's grace, of course."

At a quarter *before* the appointed hour, the tender limbs of the delicate Miss Tubbs were shivering at the Little Park-Gate of Tubbs' Hall ; at a quarter *after* the appointed hour, Mr. Tardy left Neverdone Castle. On approaching the Gate, Loiter, to his infinite delight, perceived, through the thick mist, the dark outline of a human figure.

"My angel !" he exclaimed, and clasped it in his arms.

" So, you are come at last, don't you know ? It was by the merest accident in the world I happened to turn out so early this morning, you see ; and what brought me this way rather than any other, I protest I can't tell, you know. But here I found my Clara, and—Upon my soul, Master Loiter, this was a close run race, don't you perceive ? A few minutes earlier you would have been off with the girl, and then I might have whistled for her, you see. As it is, my dear boy, you are exactly a quarter of an hour too late, don't you know ?"

So Mr. Tubbs returned to the Hall, and Mr. Tardy went home again—to bed.

On the Thursday succeeding this event there appeared in the " Limpingham Observer" the following paragraph :—

" Yesterday, at Limpingham Church, was married, Robert Lumpy, Esq., to Miss Julia Tubbs, youngest daughter of Onesimus Tubbs, Esq., of Box Wood. The happy couple immediately set off for Harrowgate. Their joint fortunes are said to amount to £22,172. 14s. 3*½*d. *per annum*. We can append to this a curious little anecdote connected with the event. About seventeen weeks ago, the young lady eloped with Peter Loiter, Esq., eldest son of Sir

Dawdlemore Loiter ; but the parties were overtaken (fortunately in our opinion) as they were changing horses at Hounslow, within three stages of London.”

In this statement our readers will perceive a slight error or two, which, as it is usual with the “Limpingham Observer,” were duly corrected in the next day’s paper. The correction ran thus:—

“ In our paper of yesterday we were led into a trifling mistake concerning the recent marriage. The parties, it appears, were *Simon Lumpy*, Esq. (not Robert) and Miss *Clara* (not Julia) Tubbs, *only* daughter of *Lawrence* (not *Onesimus*) Tubbs, Esq., of *Tubbs’ Hall* (not *Box Wood*). The happy couple went, not to Harrowgate (though we, for our parts, cannot think that that signifies much), but to *Brighton*; and their joint fortune, as it now turns out, is only £9000 *per annum*, (though, as Dr. Johnson says, round numbers are seldom to be relied upon, it is still possible we may be right as to the £172. 14s. 3½d.). The elopement did not succeed *quite* to the extent we have stated; and the gentleman concerned was not *Peter Loiter*, Esq., (for, upon inquiry, we find there is no such person,) but *Loiter Lag Tardy*, Esq., *younger* (not the *elder*) son

of Sir Dawdlemore *Tardy*, Bart., (not *Loiter*) —and indeed we must admit that, upon a careful examination of the baronetage, no such name as Loiter appears there, at least since James I., by whom the *modern* baronetage was founded—although it is, nevertheless, possible it may have existed *prior* to that monarch's reign, which succeeded that of Queen Elizabeth, or, as she is called by some writers, “Good Queen Bess,” whose reign (as some of our readers may be glad to be informed) was remarkable for the destruction of the Spanish Armada. To this we may add, that the happy pair were not united at Limpingham Church, (or Limpinghame, as it ought properly to be written,) but by special license, at Tubbs' Hall. We are told, also, that we were wrong in announcing the ceremony as having taken place on Wednesday, as, in fact, it occurred on *Tuesday*, (an error, by the by, of no importance,) and the elopement alluded to was attempted, not seventeen weeks ago, but *within the last week*—though the main point, that an elopement *was attempted*, is not denied. Hounslow, too, which we have stated as being *three* stages from London, is, as our too querulous corrector informs us, only *one*. However, we

were so far right, inasmuch as it is a *long* and (taking Brentford into account) somewhat a *heavy* stage. We make these corrections to satisfy what seems to us to be the over-scrupulous punctiliousness of the parties, *although we were right in the main.*"

We have given these paragraphs at length, in order to satisfy the world that even the "Limpingham Observer," (notwithstanding the cautious accuracy for which its erudite and profound paragraph-monger is so generally remarkable), cannot always be punctiliously correct in the interesting gossip with which it indulges its readers.

The disappointment that Mr. Tardy here experienced brought him to resolve to live a bachelor: a resolution which he maintained throughout the rest of his life.

Unfortunate in love, Mr. Tardy took refuge in politics; and, a vacancy occurring at Rottenbury, he presented himself as a candidate to serve in Parliament, as one of the representatives of that independent and respectable borough. Although he had no support in the contest, save his own talents and integrity, (for his family interest, and three thousand pounds advanced by his father to serve a pur-

pose of his own in getting his son into Parliament, could have had no influence over the minds of the independent voters of Rottenbury,) Tardy ran his opponent, Lord George Pliant, so hard in the canvass, that it was difficult even to guess on which side fortune would declare. By his promptitude and industry he astonished, indeed, all those who were aware of his usual habits of indolence and procrastination.

He had, as he believed, canvassed every person who had a vote to (qu.) *sell?* for Rottenbury, except one Mr. Grubthorpe, a farmer, whom (living at a village seven miles off) Mr. Tardy resolved to leave till the last. Just within three hours of the time appointed for the opening of the poll, he ordered his horse for the purpose of paying a visit to the farmer. He had set one foot in the stirrup, when the London newspaper was put into his hand. He opened it, and turned to the sporting intelligence.

“ How’s this !” exclaimed he ; “ Blue-Stocking not expected to run ! That alters my book ; it may make a difference of sixty guineas to me. As soon as I return I ’ll—stop—I ’ll write up to my friend Snaffle upon the subject at once—no—I ’d better first go over to—no—I ’ll write this letter, and then it will be off my mind.”

He returned to his room, wrote a long letter to his friend Snaffle touching this all-important matter of sixty guineas, and, having so done, he mounted his horse and rode over to solicit the vote of Mr. Grubthorpe.

On his way thither he met Lord George Pliant returning towards Rottenbury. They coldly exchanged bows and passed each on his way.

Arrived at Mr. Grubthorpe's, Tardy stated to him the object of his visit. To whom, as Milton would express it—to whom thus Grubthorpe :

“Lard, sir ! how could ‘ee come so leate ? I ha’ had twenty visits from his Lardship, nor wou’dn’ promise he in hopes ye’d come, for I knows yer feyther ; but as this weare the last day I didn’t think ye’d come at all, so I weare obliged to teake care o’ myself, and so I ha’ just promised my vote to my Lard. Lard, sir ! if ye had but come the matter of a quarter of an hour ago !”

At the final close of the poll the numbers were declared :—

Lord George Pliant	371
Loiter Lag Tardy, Esq.	370
Hurra ! Pliant for ever ! Glorious majority of one !!!	

Not long afterwards Lord George Pliant, by accepting the Chiltern Hundreds, (and, proba-

bly, something more,) vacated his seat ; and then Mr. Tardy was, without opposition, returned member for Rottenbury : the sole condition of his election being that he would oppose, might and main, the Rottenbury-Payment-of-rate-for-building-a-bridge-across-the-River-Slush Enforcement-Bill.

Loiter Lag Tardy, Esq., M.P., went to London ; and no sooner arrived there than he took the oaths and his seat. His arrival was opportune ; for it happened that, on the evening of that very day, a hard struggle was expected to take place on the third reading of the Rottenbury,—&c., &c.,—Enforcement-Bill.

On that same evening, Mrs. Siddons, whom he had never seen, was to play *Lady Macbeth* : so, as the Rottenbury Bill was not expected to come on earlier than half-past ten, and the other business before the House being unimportant, he despatched his servant to Drury-Lane Theatre, to secure a place for him. Every place was already taken ; but, fortunately, at the very moment of the application, one front seat in the stage-box was given up, and this was transferred to Mr. Tardy (with the M.P. tacked to the name, of course).

In order to be near the scene of action, and that no time might be lost, he took his dinner at the “Shakspeare;” and, whilst sipping his wine, addressed short letters to every person of his acquaintance, principally, we believe, for the gratification of scrawling “*Free, L. L. Tardy,*” on the outside of them.

At that period the performances commenced at half-past six. The dial in the coffee-room indicated that precise time. Mr. Tardy didn’t care to hear the overture, so he called for another half-pint of port and more writing-paper. Having inadvertently overstaid the time by which, according to his calculation, the first scene of the play would be over, the loss of the second would be of the less consequence; and as, indeed, all he cared about was to see Mrs. Siddons, he could imagine no reason why he should hurry his wine. And now, having deliberately finished his last glass, he proceeded to the theatre.

On passing along the lobby, his ears were assailed with the awful sound of “First act over!” and the honourable member for Rottenbury reached his box-door just in time to see a long thin leg, in a blue silk-stocking, striding over three benches at once down into the very

place which, till then, had been reserved for himself.

“ That *is* unlucky, sir ! ” said the box-keeper as he closed the door ; “ you are *so little* too late.”

“ Better late than never,” replied the M.P. : “ I can see *something* through the glass.”

And he did see all the action of Macbeth, and he also *heard* some of the louder portions of the choruses.

The tragedy concluded, he procured a tolerable place for the afterpiece. It was the “ Spoiled Child,” in which Mrs. Jordan acted the part of Little Pickle. Aware that his parliamentary duties would not allow of his seeing the whole of the entertainment, he thought, nevertheless, that he might indulge himself with the first act. The first act finishing somewhat earlier than he had been told it would, and the Rottenbury Bill not being expected to come on *before* half-past ten, (which, most probably, would be eleven,) there was no good reason why he should not enjoy a little of the second. At a quarter before eleven the piece was so very nearly at an end that it would be absurd not to wait its termination. The green curtain fell ; and, gratified beyond

description by the inimitable performance he had witnessed, the member for Rottenbury hurried down to the House.

Full of the importance of his new position, with becoming dignity he marched up stairs towards the lobby, but, to his astonishment, the doors were closed.

“ Beg pardon, sir,” said one of the polite gentlemen in black, (at the same time *not* opening the door,) “ after the division, if you please.”

“ Oh !” said Mr. Tardy, and waited where he was.

On being admitted, he found that the House had just then divided on the third reading of the Rottenbury-Payment-of-Rate-for-building-a-Bridge-across-the-River-Slush Enforcement-Bill, which, after an animated debate, was carried by a majority of ONE : the Speaker, in the absence of the honourable member, having decided the question by his casting vote !

No sooner did the news reach his constituents at Rottenbury that the Rate-paying-Enforcement-Bill (for the express object of opposing which they had returned Mr. Tardy to Parliament) had been carried against them, and that, too, entirely owing to his absence on the divi-

sion, than the free and independent electors forwarded what they called a “peremptory *request*” to their representative that he would instantly surrender the important trust, which, for the good of the British empire in general, and of the borough of Rottenbury in particular, they had confided to him. This he accordingly did, and returned un-M.P.’d to Neverdone Castle.

Years rolled on. In their advance they carried Mr. Tardy along with them — through the prime of life — into its meridian — past it.

He was now fifty-five. At this period old Sir Dawdlemore died. The elder brother succeeded, of course, to the title, the estates, and all the advantages of primogeniture. Loiter inherited a legacy of twenty thousand pounds. This bequest would materially improve his condition; for, having no one to provide for but himself, he determined to lay out the entire sum in the purchase of an annuity for his own life. Arrangements for that purpose were immediately entered into; and, in order that the money might be forthcoming as soon as required, it was placed in the rich, responsible, and long-established banking-house of Messrs. Spec, Smash, and Co., London. He

would now be the master of about eighteen hundred a-year.

"It comes too late for me to enjoy it as once I should have done," thought he; "but better late than never."

Having occasion to go into the city one morning on account of some business connected with his annuity, his eye was caught by a ticket, numbered 77, in the window of a lottery-office. He walked on, and presently got into a hackney-coach: it was numbered 77. He drove to his solicitor's: his house was numbered 77. At night (naturally enough) Tardy dreamt that No. 77 was drawn the great prize in the lottery. He rose early the next morning, and sallied forth from his lodgings in Pall-Mall to Cornhill, resolved to purchase No. 77. The ticket occupied the same place in the window. He entered the office, drew from his pocket twenty pounds, and ——

"Hold!" said he; "slow and sure; 't is a great deal of money to throw away on a lottery speculation; I'll consider of it."

He retraced his steps. At Temple Bar, an old man implored his charity.

"What's your age, my fine fellow?" asked Mr. Tardy.

"Seventy-seven, sir," was the reply.

This was irresistible. Back again he flew to Cornhill. Again the twenty pounds were displayed on the counter.

"Give me ticket No. 77," said he to the office-keeper.

"No. 77, sir?" said the man; "sold it only a quarter of an hour ago, in a whole ticket, sir."

Two days afterwards, No. 77 was drawn a prize of five thousand pounds. Even the ingenuity of Mr. Tardy in twisting "better late than never" into a consolation failed upon this occasion.

Just at the same time when he received intelligence of this unlucky miss, his solicitor called at his lodgings. The purpose of his visit was to *hint* to Mr. Tardy that, from certain whispers afloat in the city, touching the credit of Messrs. Spec, Smash, and Co., it might be prudent to withdraw his deposit from their custody. "He could not speak out — it was a delicate matter — *might* injure the credit of a long-established house — an action at law — prosecution — heavy damages. However, he had drawn every shilling of *his* money out of their hands. Mr. Tardy would,

of course, do as he pleased; yet, were *he* in *his* place, most certainly *he*—but, as he said before, he could say nothing.”

And, having disburthened himself of these agreeable inuendoes, the cautious solicitor took his leave.

Here was matter for rumination—and—slow and sure—Mr. Tardy did ruminate upon it during the greater part of the day. The firm of Spec, Smash, and Co. in a ticklish condition! The thing was impossible. A house so long established—so wealthy—so close and wary in its transactions! And then, the individual partners so affluent! Each with his establishments in town and country; one with his yacht—another with his stud of racers!—To doubt *their* stability! Pooh! Besides, to withdraw so large a sum at a moment’s notice would betray a want of confidence in those most respectable men, and wound their feelings. And yet, there was no smoke without fire. Could he but find a decent pretext for removing his account! And, fortunately a decent pretext was afforded him.

Notice was sent him that, all the preliminary forms towards the settlement of his an-

nuity being arranged, nothing now remained but to pay the twenty thousand pounds, which, if convenient to Mr. Tardy, he might do at two o'clock on the morrow. Thus were appeased Mr. Tardy's delicate scruples regarding the tender feelings of his bankers ; and, with respect to the safety of his property, his mind was set perfectly at rest.

At one o'clock on the morrow, Mr. Tardy, resolving to be punctual to this most important appointment, walked stoutly towards the City, neither turning to the right hand nor to the left—except to see some wherries start on a rowing-match from Blackfriars Bridge : nor stopping by the way—except occasionally to look at some of the very best caricatures ever exhibited. Thus it was three-quarters past two when he reached the place of his destination—a delay, however, which was of no importance, he being quite in time to sign the necessary papers and deeds.

"I am rather late, I know," exclaimed Tardy, laughingly ; "but better late than never."

As he was drawing his cheque-book from his pocket, a gentleman entered the office.

"Here's a pretty piece of work!" said

he. “Spec, Smash, and Co. stopt payment, and there won’t be half-a-crown in the pound.”

“Eh! — how! — what! — when?” said, or rather gurgled, Mr. Tardy.

“They have been paying till within this quarter of an hour,” was the reply; “but if you have any curiosity about it, sir, you may now see their beautiful polished-mahogany shutters up.”

The wealthy, respectable, and long-established Messrs. Spec, Smash, and Co., assuring their creditors that there would turn out to be forty shillings in the pound — in time — Mr. Tardy, for his own part, was satisfied. After the lapse of nineteen months, a first and final dividend was declared of eight-pence three-farthings in the pound, which Mr. Tardy would have received — had he not arrived a quarter of an hour too late to prove his debt.

Mr. Tardy entered his sixtieth year, yet had experience not rendered him wiser. The fatal influence of the family mottoes attended him to the very close of his existence. For several years had he kept up an insurance on his life for three thousand pounds, in favour of a young

lady who was either his niece, or his cousin, or the orphan daughter of a naval officer—for he was not consistent in his explanations upon this point. In due course he received the usual notice that the premium for the insurance was becoming due; but, fifteen days beyond the period specified being allowed for the payment, Mr. Tardy had plenty of time before him, and he saw no earthly reason why he should hurry himself in the business. The last of those days of grace arrived; and so, nearly, had the last hour. He was rather late in his payment, he admitted; but, “better late than never.” So, he mounted his horse, and set off at a brisk trot towards the insurance-office.

He had not proceeded far when his horse stumbled and threw him. He was carried home senseless from a severe contusion on the head. Preparations were made for bleeding him. He recovered himself sufficiently to be aware of what was going on.

“Slow and sure,” he faintly articulated; “as I never have been bled, I have a great objection to undergoing that operation now.”

In vain did the surgeon assure him that his life depended upon it: remonstrance and en-

treaty were alike unavailing. After the lapse of a quarter of an hour, the surgeon, kindly taking his hand, once more urged him to submit to his advice ; adding, at the same time, “Indeed, indeed, sir, unless you instantly do so, it will be too late.”

“Do as you please, then,” replied he, in a voice scarcely audible ; “better late than never.”

Even whilst the surgeon was pointing the lancet to his arm, poor Tardy breathed his last.

“Had he consented to this a quarter of an hour ago,” exclaimed the operator, “I would have answered for his recovery.”

This melancholy event occurred at precisely fifteen minutes past four o’clock, as it was sworn to, before a magistrate, by the parties present. It is important that we should be thus particular concerning the time of his death ; for, at four o’clock precisely, the policy for the benefit of the mysterious young lady we have alluded to, and which till that hour had remained in force, became void and valueless ! it expired — just one quarter of an hour before Mr. Tardy !

Of the life of Loiter Lag Tardy, procras-

tination had been the bane. And, as he had made his entrance into the world, even so did he quit it — a quarter of an hour too late !

MY AUNT'S BEQUEST.

WAITING for a dead man's shoes is commonly considered to be a precarious dependence: be this as it may, no one will deny that it is a tedious state of existence.

Waiting for a dead woman's slippers is worse both ways: old men *do* die; old women *won't* —if they can help it: and then, women are the more capricious.

I cannot reproach myself with any lack of duty towards my Aunt Susannah, during her blessed life-time, (and a long one it was!) yet _____. But the sanctity of the grave must be respected, so I will not even hint a thought to the dishonour of her memory.

Her husband, the Rev. Phineas Wheezy, died in the year 1800. He was Vicar of St. Calvo's, Essex; Rector of St. Snooks', Lancashire, and of Great Trediddel's, Cornwall;

Chaplain to Sir Pryse Pryse-Pryse, Bart., of Prysellollwyth Hall, Monmouthshire; Librarian to the Duke of Dunderleigh, at Dunderleigh Park, Cumberland; Morning Lecturer at St. Snorum's, Yorkshire; and Afternoon Lecturer at St. Snort's, near Rochester, Kent: so, for the convenience of not performing any of these various duties, he inhabited a house at Putney, in Surrey.

It will not be wondered at that, by the ungodly and the inconsiderate — let us call them the envious, rather — he was occasionally taunted with his pluralities, and reproved for what those cavillers deemed his utter neglect of his sacred duties; but against the attacks of such as these he was prepared with a ready and an unanswerable defence.

“Were I,” he would say, “to comply with any one of those calls upon my personal attendance—calls, various as they are numerous, and distant as they are various”—(for, on such occasions, my uncle was wont to ensconce himself behind an impenetrable phrase)—“distant, I say, as they are various, how justly should I stand chargeable with undue preference to that one, thereby making my neglect of all the others the more offensive,

inasmuch as it would be the more remarkable ! Besides, with respect to my lectureships alone, my lectureships alone, I say, is it possible—is it within the bounds of human possibility, that I should be at St. Snorum's, Yorkshire, at ten in the morning, and at St. Snort's, Kent, at three in the afternoon ? I ask you, is it within the widest scope of possibility ? ”

Having asked this perplexing question, he would, like Brutus, “ pause for a reply ; ” and, as no one was ever found bold enough to deny the impossibility of performing, within the brief space of five hours, such a journey as the one he suggested, he would end the argument, and satisfy his own conscience at the same time, by exclaiming —“ Monstrous ! Perfectly preposterous to expect of any man that he should do duty in two places, far distant from each other, almost at one and the same moment.”

Now, as the income of the Rev. Phineas Wheezy, from his numerous benefices and appointments, was large ; and he being unblest with any children to assist him in the agreeable occupation of diminishing it, it has always been a matter of astonishment that he should have died worth no more than forty thousand pounds. So it was, however ; and the whole

of this he bequeathed, unconditionally, to his widow — leaving to each of us, his nephews, nieces, and cousins, a legacy of — dependance upon the justice or generosity of our aunt Susannah.

If I cannot applaud my aunt for acting, upon this occasion, with either generosity or justice, I must, at least, admit that she displayed no inconsiderable share of humanity. Feeling, as she did, that doubt, anxiety, and suspense, are painful sensations, she extinguished them in our bosoms by at once assuring us, “upon her honour, as a lady,” that, were it to save us all from starving, she would not give us a single shilling during her life-time. But she added that, at her death, we should be remembered, each according to our conduct towards her: thus holding us rigidly to our good behaviour.

At her death! At the period of my uncle's departure (1800) my aunt Susannah was already in her sixty-seventh year; and, as she had always been of a sickly constitution, we could scarcely *hope*—(yes, *hope* was the word)—that she should live long. Indeed, we had observed, and not without proportionate alarm, a gradual decline in her health ever since the

day of her beloved husband's death. Our solicitude — that is to say, of us, the expectant nephews, and nieces, and cousins — was intense ; and sharp, indeed, were the struggles, and frequent the quarrels between us, for precedence in affectionate attendance upon the suffering old lady.

Kindness has been said to kill : oh ! could it have availed to cure !

Aunt Wheezy exhibited symptoms of pulmonary consumption : my cousin Robert was anxious that, for the benefit of her health, she should pass a few weeks with him at Blowbluster Cottage, on the top of North Hill.

Towards the end of the first year of her widowhood, she had a slight attack of ague : for the benefit of her health, she was invited by my sister Briggs to spend the winter months at her house on the borders of the Essex marshes.

Dr. Drench, apprehensive that the depression of spirits, under which my aunt had laboured ever since the loss of my poor uncle, might lead to some fatal derangement of the system, recommended a change of scene : my cousin Peter, laudably zealous to carry the doctor's advice into effect, hired a nice apart-

ment for Aunt Susannah, at the undertaker's, directly opposite to the churchyard, at Kensington.

She was subject to cholic and spasms in the stomach, and frequently was her precious life endangered by their attacks. *My* affection for the old lady was manifested by slight and delicate attentions, rather than by acts of important service, which, indeed, I had neither means nor opportunity to perform : I made her frequent presents of choice or early fruit—chiefly egg-plums and cherries ; then I would send her a mould of ice-cream ; or, if she complained of thirst, I was instantly at her side with a goblet of *iced* lemonade. It was by such and similar *petits soins* (as the French term these amiable minor services,) that *I* endeavoured to please.

At the time of my uncle's decease, I had just entered my twenty-first year. It is not from any doubt of the reader's knowledge of arithmetic, or with a view to an ostentatious display of my own proficiency in that exact science, I also inform him that I am now in my fifty-second.*

* This paper first appeared in 1831.

My father had bequeathed me a property producing an income of about a hundred-and-fifty pounds *per annum*. This was not sufficient for splendour, scarcely for independence; in order, therefore, to increase it, it was necessary I should assume a profession. I chose the bar, and took chambers in Gray's Inn. I read hard; and my vanity leads me to believe that, had I continued my studies, my labours would have been rewarded with no common share of success. Had Aunt Susannah been a much younger woman than she actually was, I should have done so; for the prospect of the legacy I was justified in expecting, by being more remote, would have formed a less important item in the catalogue of my worldly considerations, and, consequently, have less interrupted, if it would at all have interrupted, my present occupations. As it was, the hope—Heaven forbid!—I mean, the *probability*—of speedily succeeding to a good share of her property, which, by dint of assiduity, I might induce her to make better, was a temptation too obvious and too strong for resistance.

There were three other unfortunate circumstances against me. First: of all the expect-

ants of the Wheezy property, (and we were nine, male and female,) I was the only one unmarried ; secondly, I was the only one without any evident employment, (for, being a mere student, and my studies not appearing to be productive, in a pecuniary sense, my time was estimated at no great value;) and, thirdly, I was the only one, at that time, living in London : so that, if any thing was to be done, whether as a matter of necessity, or to gratify a caprice, it was always—"Tom is a bachelor, Tom does n't live so very far off, Tom has nothing better to do, so Tom must do it." From what I have here stated, it will naturally be inferred that profitable application to my profession was impracticable.

The distance between the aunt and the nephew was soon to be diminished.

After three years of widowhood, conceiving that the establishment at Putney was too large for "a poor lone woman," she sold the villa, dismissed her servants, and rented the parlour-floor of a dark, dingy, black house—(one of those dens with twenty-four small panes of glass, set in thick, clumsy frames, to each of the windows, and one solitary poplar growing up in front of them)—in a narrow street at

Kensington, where she was waited upon by the one maid-servant.

It is impossible to conceive any thing more melancholy than was this change; not but that, in *one* way, it was gratifying to *us*: for it required no Johnsonian grasp of intellect to understand that the less my aunt spent of her income the more of it must remain for its inheritors. The furniture, the library, the plate, the wines—and such wines!—(I have said my uncle was a parson)—the carriage, the horses, all, all were sold!

"So, for a good old-gentlemanly vice.
I think I must take up with avarice."

Well; although we saw those possessions depart from us, there still remained their value in money: and it was a consolatory reflection that money bears interest, which would have been lost upon the commodities themselves, for the year, or, perhaps, the two years, our dear aunt might yet live—for she was now seventy, and her health, *unhappily*, in a more unsettled state than ever.

The anxiety attendant upon the sale of her property, and the investment, to the greatest advantage, of its proceeds, together with the fatigue of moving, could not but operate detri-

mentally to the health of a person so aged and so infirm as my aunt Susannah. It was less to our astonishment, therefore, than our grief that, on the third day after her removal to the dingy parlour-floor at Kensington, we (the expectants) received intelligence from Doctor Drench, that Mrs. Wheezy was dangerously ill of a bilious fever !

Our distress at this announcement was greatly aggravated by the doctor's pressing desire for our immediate attendance, as he could give us no *hopes* of her surviving the next four-and-twenty hours.

Never, surely, was a departing creature blest with so affectionate a set of relatives ! Scarcely had we received the afflicting summons ere we were all at her bed-side, each accompanied by a physician and two apothecaries.

"My dears," said my aunt — (She spoke faintly, and uttered only a word or two at a time) — "my dears, this proof of your affectionate solicitude concerning me affects me deeply. I expected no less from you, and of this you will receive a proof."

Here we wept bitterly ; begging her, at the same time, not to allude to *that*.

"Ah ! my dears ! to lose your poor aunt at

her time of life — seventy, only seventy! — would be a severe blow to you!"

Here we wept more bitterly still.

"But, my children — for as my children I consider you — pray for her — pray for her — —"

Here we absolutely roared with grief, and were about to kneel, in order to fulfil the solemn task she enjoined us.

"Pray for her — speedy recovery and long life."

At this precise instant, Doctor Drench, perceiving that his patient was somewhat exhausted by the fatigue of talking, requested us to quit the room. We readily assented.

Cousins, nephews, nieces, doctors, and apothecaries, all adjourned to the adjoining apartment.

"Is there no hope, gentlemen?" inquired Cousin Robert.

The gentlemen, to whom this melancholy question was addressed, shook, with becoming gravity, their professional heads.

"The lady cannot live through this night," said one of them: "the case is utterly hopeless; therefore, for us to repeat our visit would be an act of dishonesty."

He and the rest accepted their fees.

The apothecaries looked astonished and dis-satisfied.

"*But*," continued the speaker, "we will pre-scribe something which, at the worst, can do no harm."

"Are you certain — quite certain she will die ?" inquired my sister Briggs ; "is there really no *hope*? Let us know the *worst*."

"While there is life there is always hope," replied Doctor Drench, to whom the ques-tion was more particularly addressed ; "she *may*—she *may* rally a little in the morning."

"May she!" exclaimed Cousin Peter, in a tone more indicative (as I thought) of consternation than of joy ; "may she! For Heaven's sake, gentlemen, do all of you come again to-morrow — for fear of accident."

On the second day the physicians came again ; and, on the third, we found, notwithstanding this, that aunt was a *leetle* better.

Peter now admitted that we might as well throw money into the Thames as spend it on a hopeless case. The extra physicians were, consequently, dismissed, and Mrs. Wheezy was left entirely to the care of Doctor Drench.

On the fourth day, aunt was "not so well ;"

on the fifth day, she was “worse ;” on the sixth, “she could not possibly live through the night ;” on the seventh, “she had rallied a little ;” on the eighth, it was “all *but* over ;” on the ninth, — ! Doctor Drench met us in the parlour to communicate to us that, in the course of the night, so wonderful a change had taken place, that he might now venture to give us *hopes*.

“ *Hopes*, doctor !” exclaimed Peter ; “hopes of what ?”

“ Of Mrs. Wheezy’s recovery ; and, should she recover this bout, such a change will have been operated in her system, that — of course I cannot promise it—*but*”—(and here he took us all kindly by the hand,)—“ *but*, I say, *should* she recover, she may creep on for these ten years to come.”

This Doctor Drench was a tolerably clever man in his profession ; yet, I own, he had never been a favourite of mine.

His pleasing anticipations were confirmed —Aunt Wheezy *did* recover. What was our joy at this event may be more easily conceived than described ! Our joy, however, did not prevent certain little bickerings amongst us, the affectionate relatives of Aunt Wheezy. Our

assiduous and disinterested attentions to her, in the manifestation of which each of us strove to out-do the other, were productive of mutual reproaches and recriminations : Cousin Robert told my sister Briggs, that the object of *her* extraordinary kindness to the old lady was not to be misunderstood ; Sister Briggs declared to Robert that she positively blushed at *his* bare-faced proceedings ; I called Peter a time-server, while Peter bestowed upon me the title of legacy-hunter. I will take this opportunity to mention, that our disputes upon this, and some future occasions of a similar nature, caused a total disunion of one of the most loving families the world had ever beheld.

A few days after my aunt's blessed recovery, I received from her the following note :—

“ My dear Tom,

“ Pray come and dine with your poor lone aunt on Sunday next, at four o'clock precisely. But *be* with me at two precisely, as I have something of great importance to you to communicate. Bring ‘The Observer’ newspaper with you.

“ I remain your affectionate aunt,
“ SUSANNAH WHEEZY.”

“ P. S. Buy me a cribbage-board.”

As I had previously engaged to join an agreeable party (a certain Miss Anna-Maria Brackenbury being one) in an excursion to Richmond, this invitation was somewhat *mal-à-propos*: but the “something of great importance” was a hint sufficiently significant; so I resolved to sacrifice my pleasure to that which I could not consider in any other light than as my interest.

As the clock struck two, I entered Aunt Susannah’s dingy parlour. The cribbage-board was deposited in the side-board drawer, and “*The Observer*” (which I was to read aloud after dinner,) on the mantel-piece.

After a few preparatory “a-hems!” thus did my aunt unfold the “something of great importance.”

“Thomas, I am a poor lone woman. Though I am but seventy-one, I feel that, suffering and ailing as I do, I shall not make old bones; I am not long for this world; but, while I am permitted to live, do you, my dear Thomas, consider my forlorn condition, and be kind to me. You are a young man, and attendance upon a poor creature like me cannot but be irksome to you; yet—ah! had I children of my own! but, alas! I have neither chick nor

child ; my property is all in the funds, every shilling of it is at my own disposal—I say *every shilling of it is at my own disposal*—(Do you attend to what I say, my dear Thomas ?) — and when I die — ! Ah ! there are *many* who look forward with impatience to that event : not *you*, Thomas ; but, during my late illness, I remarked that the others—ay, every one of them, seemed anxious for the fatal — ”

“ Why, to speak candidly, my dear aunt,” said I — (and I trust my *candour* will not be suspected)—“I must confess—though it grieves me to say it of them—their behaviour was any thing but what it ought to have been. Heavens ! the bare idea of allowing the hope of inheriting a little vile dross so far to overpower the sentiments of nature, the feelings of the heart, the natural affections of the — of the — in short, to entertain sentiments so interested as to lead one to form a wish for — ! and so good, so kind an aunt, too ! O, inhuman ! ”

Here my pathos drew tears from Aunt Wheezy’s eyes, and my own too.

“ Ah ! my dear Tom, were they all like you — ! But, no matter ; it will be the worse for *them*, and the better for *somebody*

else, one of these days ;" and, as she said this, she patted my hand, which was resting on her arm.

At *that* moment I felt like a sole legatee.

"But, to proceed to what I wished to say to you : " and, continued she, in rather a solemn tone, " Thomas — Tom, my dear, Saturday is the day for washing poor little Flora," [this was her Dutch pug-dog,] " and, although the dear creature has not been washed since the day I fell ill, yet (would you believe it ?) the servant of the house has refused to take the trouble of cleaning the little darling !"

I could not suppress my indignation at such barbarity ; yet I was at a loss to understand how it could be considered as "something of great importance" to me.

"Now, Tom, as you have nothing else to do, you must come to-morrow at two o'clock, carry the poor thing to the Park, and give her a nice washing in the Serpentine."

This was an employment for which I felt no relish ; so I told Aunt Susannah that it happened, most unfortunately, that I had already engaged myself with a party to the Exhibition, for the very hour she mentioned.

"Very well, sir ; I dare say I shall find some

one who will be glad of an opportunity of doing me a favour," replied my aunt Wheezy.

At *this* moment I felt like one disinherited.

The sacrifice of a visit to the Exhibition was but a trifle (although Miss Brackenbury had promised to take my arm through the rooms) in comparison with the putting in jeopardy of a fine legacy; so, since it was not only my duty, but my desire to obey my dear aunt, I consented to perform the ceremonies of Miss Flora's toilette.

I have said, that the change from the villa at Putney to the parlour at Kensington was, to me, at least, a melancholy one. The Sunday dinners of my late uncle used to be as delightful as excellent society, an excellent table, and excellent wines, could make them. Now ——— ! At four o'clock I was seated opposite to my aunt Wheezy, at a small square table, in her dark, dingy parlour; our repast consisting of a roast neck of mutton, (a thing I detest,) three potatoes, two suet dumplings, and a pint of Cape Sherry, just purchased at the nearest public-house.

Such a dinner was soon ended; and, the cloth being removed, I was desired to read "The Observer." I began with some article

of news — a murder at Wapping, or a fire at Bermondsey — I do not exactly remember which — which I thought might be interesting to the old lady.

“ Is that your method of reading a newspaper ? If the task be too troublesome to you, I dare say I can find some one who will be glad to take it off your hands. Ah ! that I had a child of my own ! But I am a poor lone woman ; I have neither chick nor child ; my money is all at my own disposal, and——. Well, sir, if you choose to read it, begin at the beginning.”

Accordingly, I began with the first advertisement, (which was an interesting list of seven hundred and sixty-five persons who had taken out game-licenses;) and read through and through till (*Laus Deo !*) I came to the no less interesting names of the printer and the publisher. Ten o'clock being my aunt's hour of retiring to rest, at half-past nine I was dismissed ; not without a reminder, however, of my duty for the morrow.

The next morning I waited upon Miss Brackenbury ; and, telling her that *an important affair* would deprive me of the pleasure of attending her to the Exhibition—(I took care

not to say that I was engaged to wash a dirty pug-dog in the Serpentine,) — requested she would allow me to make myself amends for so severe a loss, by accompanying her in the evening to the theatre. To this request she kindly consented.

Punctually at two o'clock I was at Kensington ; at half-past two I was engaged in the pleasing occupation of scrubbing little Flora ; and at three I was again in the dingy parlour.

“ Can you play at cribbage, Tom ? ” inquired my aunt.

I answered in the negative : I scarcely knew one card from another.

“ Then come and *tea* with me at six this evening, and I will teach you.”

“ It happens, most unluckily,” said I, “ that I have promised to take a young lady to the theatre this evening ; and, as I cannot civilly release myself from the engagement, I——”

“ Very well, sir. Heaven defend us from depending upon one's relations for *any* thing ! I dare say I shall find some one who will be glad to pass an hour or two with me. Only remember—my property is all at my own disposal,” &c. &c.

I required no plainer a hint. I trotted off

from Kensington to Somers Town, made an awkward apology to Anna-Maria for this second disappointment, and at six o'clock I found myself enjoying the luxuries of black tea and cribbage with my aunt Wheezy.

"You are an apt scholar, Tom," said my aunt, after having made me play seven-and-thirty games at penny cribbage with her; "come again to-morrow at six, and take your revenge."—(I had lost seven-pence.)

"To-morrow, aunt? Impossible! I am going with my friend Wilkins to the Opera."

This objection was met by the usual hint at her property being entirely at her own disposal; so at six on the following evening I was again in the dark dingy parlour.

By dint of the application of this threat respecting her property, Aunt Wheezy contrived, within three months, to render me her slave. Every Saturday was I compelled — setting all other affairs aside—to wash Flora in the Serpentine; to eat roast neck of mutton, drink Cape Sherry, and read "*The Observer*" through, every Sunday; and to play at cribbage, from six o'clock till half-past nine, every evening in the week, Sundays excepted. To assert that I did not dare say my soul was my own would

be ridiculous ; for, to confess the truth, I doubt, when I reflect on my past subserviency, whether I have a soul.

In the midst of these avocations, which entirely diverted me from my profession, I yet found time to pay a daily visit to Anna-Maria.

At the end of three years, Mr. Brackenbury (her papa) asked me if I entertained any serious intentions respecting his daughter. My intentions respecting her were serious indeed, for I contemplated marriage. I loved Anna-Maria ; and my " love " was exactly of that " sweet " quality which " meets return."

" Sweet is the love that meets return ! "

" Well," said old Brackenbury, " I have no objection to you for a son-in-law ; you have a rich aunt ; if she will give you four thousand pounds, I will give you a like sum, and Anna-Maria into the bargain."

That same evening, at cribbage, I ventured to break to Aunt Susannah the matter of my intended marriage.

" What ! " exclaimed she, " marry ! and what is to become of *me* ? Who will pass the evenings with *me* ? Who will wash Flora in the Serpentine ? Who will ————— ? But, do

as you please—leave *me* to die alone. I require only one and a last favour of you. Call upon Mr. Quirk, my attorney, and desire him to be with me to-morrow, early: he must make some important alterations in a *certain paper*."

This was sufficient for me. I assured my aunt that I would rather expire than marry without her consent.

"That's well," said she; "wait till I die; that will be time enough. Ah! me! I sha'n't be a trouble to you long."

At the end of another three years, Aunt Wheezy not exhibiting the slightest propensity towards dying, Mr. Brackenbury bestowed his daughter's hand on my rival, Dick Dexter, the conveyancer.

I lost my mistress; one by one I lost my friends. Aunt Wheezy was now all in all to me.

Years rolled on; Aunt Wheezy did not die. Sunday brought its neck of mutton, Cape Sherry, and "Observer;" Saturday, its washing the pug-dog in the Serpentine, (not Flora, for she and a long succession of dogs had gone the way which my aunt would *not* go;) and every evening in the week its eight-and-thirty games at penny cribbage.

On the 2nd of June, 1830, my dear aunt was still alive ! She was in her ninety-seventh year ; I in my fifty-second. My fellow expectants were all dead : I remained the only one possessing a natural right to the inheritance of the Wheezy property.

On the morning of the 3rd of June, Aunt Susannah was found dead in her bed. Her will was opened. She had left every shilling of her money to public charities : to me she bequeathed

THE CRIBBAGE-BOARD.

A DEFENCE OF THE ALPHABET.

THERE does not exist, on the face of the earth, a worse used community than the alphabet. To judge the members by the reports that are daily circulated against them, one must take them for the most troublesome, immoral, wicked, profligate, abandoned set of wretches that ever formed a society. For “poisons, conspiracies, and assassinations—libels, pasquinades, and tumults,” the very Abderites would have blushed for them.

That they sometimes appear to be concerned in “libels and pasquinades;” that instances of prostitution, religious, political, and literary, may be adduced to their discredit, must, in fairness, be admitted; but it must also be remembered, in extenuation of their seeming offences, that in such cases they are not free agents, but the mere passive instruments of potent employers against whose authority they are altogether unprovided with the means of

resistance. That they would willingly lend themselves to purposes so vile and dirty there is no reason for believing ; for those most respectable members of the community, U and I, have frequently protested against all such misemployment of their services. Of wilful participation in the criminality of such proceedings, they must, therefore, stand acquitted ; and, if odium must attach to them, it can be only in the same degree, and upon the same unjust principle, that an army is made to share in the disgrace of a defeat occasioned by the incapacity or the misconduct of its leader.

If then there be so slight a foundation for such accusations as those against them, how deplorable must their situation appear, when it is considered that all other accusations, of what nature soever, are atrocious calumnies ! Heavens ! were it otherwise, there is not one among them, from A to Izzard, for whom hanging, drawing, and quartering, would not be excess of tenderness—the hurdle, the gibbet, and the stake, a paradise. Read the daily prints, and it will be found that not an elopement is planned ; not an unsuspecting female is ruined ; not a crim. con. is committed ; not

a prodigal son is guilty of an offence, at once against his family and the state ; in short, not a crime in the long catalogue furnished by human depravity is perpetrated, but some unhappy letters of the alphabet are denounced as the criminals !

And, innocent as they are, why should this be ? Why should they, even for a day or an hour, be selected as the scape-goats, to bear the odium of offences attributable to others, who may be sufficiently adroit or sufficiently powerful to procure for themselves secrecy and shelter under cover of an innocent initial ? By such allowance, not only are the ends of justice frequently perverted and sometimes defeated, but crime is, in some measure, encouraged : for there is many a heartless fellow, who, had he no other tribunal to account to than his own indulgent conscience, would readily commit an act from which he would be deterred by the certainty of exposure to the rigour, not merely of the laws, but of public opinion, in the event of detection.

It may be objected, that this assertion is not strictly applicable as regards the graver offences against society, such as do really fall within the cognizance of the laws ; and that no sub-

terfuge is available to screen the authors of such misdeeds from the infliction of their merited punishment. Such objection is partially admitted ; but there can be no doubt that, so far as concerns the commission of innumerable offences *contra bonos mores*, which *do not* come within reach of the arm of justice, the shelter afforded by an initial, an asterisk, or a dash, is, to those who are not passionate lovers of Virtue for her own sake, a strong temptation to take a trip with her ugly sister, which they might be induced to resist, if their names, from the first letter to the last, were liable to exposure. In either case, the injustice towards the poor alphabet is manifest.

For instance : a drunken quarrel takes place between Captain Bluster and Lieutenant Racket, in the course of which sundry bottles, glasses, and waiters' heads, are broken, three watchmen nearly beaten to death with their own staves, and the quiet inhabitants of a whole street thrown into confusion and alarm. The next day the affair is reported in the newspapers ; but, instead of naming the *real* offenders, poor B—— and R—— are held up to public indignation, as a couple of drunken, turbulent rascals.

Again : Mrs. Walker and Mr. Smith become enamoured of each other, as the phrase is : she abandons her husband and nine children, he leaves a wife and seven, to shift for themselves ; the *interesting* pair, utterly unmindful of the serious duties they are bound to perform, resolve to live together, and off they go. The *occurrence* soon becomes known ; but Mr. Smith is adroitly protected from the odium that ought to attach to his name, by throwing it on the shoulders of poor S— ; whilst for Mrs. Walker is substituted poor innocent W ! And, for such outrageous attacks upon their moral characters, the unfortunate members of the alphabet are without redress.

Now, had such a convenient mode of concealment not existed : had the parties alluded to been assured that they themselves must bear the shame of their own misconduct, and that they would not be permitted to transfer it to two unoffending letters ; it is much more than probable that their dread of exposure would have operated as a restraint upon their inclinations.

Hard is the lot of the poor alphabet ! For such outrageous attacks upon its moral character, it is without redress ! The letters have not their action for defamation ; they are

calumniated with impunity ; and this is, perhaps, the first time that a champion has ventured to stand forward in their defence !

Another, although comparatively a lighter, grievance to which they are subjected by this unfair use of their names, is the constant disturbance of their peace and quiet. Not a day passes but the whole community is alarmed for the safety, or thrown into a state of consternation by the reported annihilation, of one or more of its members, usually by violent or disgraceful means. Fire and water, the dagger and the bowl, have made (according to newspaper reports) such havoc amongst them, that one is astonished at finding a single letter well and hearty at the present moment. Last Tuesday the slaughter was, in appearance, terrific. Q—— was found drowned at Richmond, and C—— floating in the New River; the young and beautiful Mrs. A—— died in the straw; O—— was squeezed as flat as a pancake between a waggon and a wall; T—— scalded to death; U—— had put an end to a hopeless passion, by the gentle aid of garters and a bed-post; and I—— was poisoned by having eaten of a dumpling containing more arsenic than apples. Upon inquiry, however, it was dis-

covered that not one word of all this, so far as related to the parties in question, was true ; but that the real sufferers were Messieurs Quintin, Collins, Ommaney, and Ingram ; Mistresses Ash and Upham ; and Miss Tims.

The petty vexations and annoyances inflicted upon them are numerous ; but too notorious to need, as well, perhaps, as of too little importance to deserve, a notice in a defence of so grave a character as the present. With one highly meritorious letter, who shall be nameless, whose complaints are unceasing, and seemingly well founded, I confess I have no sympathy. According to his own showing, the persecutions he suffers, through the hatred of the "Warwickshire lads and lasses," and of those inhabitants of the capital who are emphatically denominated Cockneys, are not to be endured ; but I think that, in the long run, ample justice is done to him : for if, as he says, he is even in one short commandment ejected from *house*, he is generously admitted into *ox* and *ass*. Thus is he doubly compensated.

Again : the omission of some one of them, where his presence is essential, is so clearly the effect of accident, and not of ill-will, or of a deliberate intention to injure, that that also

is unworthy of our serious attention. Take, for instance, the following paragraphs selected from the newspapers, the sense of which is completely altered by the omission of the initial letter of the word printed in italics :—

“The conflict was dreadful, and the enemy was repulsed with considerable *laughter* !”

“Robert Jones was yesterday brought before the sitting magistrate on a charge of having spoken *reason* at the Barleymow public-house.”

“In consequence of the numerous accidents occasioned by skating on the Serpentine River, measures are taking to put a *top* to it.”

“When the obese Lord Lumpy visited ‘The Victory,’ the other day, he was politely drawn up the ship’s side by means of a *hair*.”

“At the Guildhall dinner none of the poultry was eatable except the *owls*.”

“A gentleman was yesterday brought up to answer a charge of having *eaten* a hackney-coachman for demanding more than his fare. And a well-known offender was accused of having stolen a small *ox* out of the Bath Mail : the stolen property was found in his coat-pocket.”

“The Russian general Kachkinoffkowsky was found dead with a long *word* sticking in his throat.”

“SMITHFIELD FESTIVITIES.—The *air* was crowded with people of all descriptions. At two o’clock the Lord Mayor drove through it in his state carriage.”

These, however, are trifling grievances. But the practice of casting upon the poor unoffending Alphabet the odium of offences committed by other people—of making the innocent suffer for the guilty—is not only grossly unjust in itself, but detrimental in the highest degree to the well-being of society at large ; for, to say nothing of high crimes and misdemeanours, it cannot be doubted that decency and morality, at least, would be less frequently violated, were the facilities of concealment diminished, and exposure rendered more prompt and certain.

ANECDOTES OF GAMING.

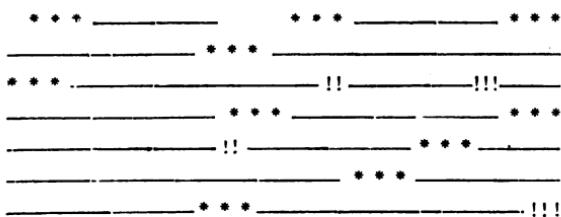
PRECEDED BY

A Sermon

ON THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF GAMING.

IN the 3rd Act of the Merry Wives of Windsor, and in the 1st Scene, it is thus written :—

“Keep a gamester from the dice and it is wonderful.”



And there is my Sermon on the Fatal Consequences of Gaming !

It is not often that I presume to be didactic, but “There is a time for all things,” saith the proverb. And, surely, time cannot be more apt for the publication of a discourse on this grave subject—and I trust that with becoming gravity I have treated it—than now when, by the most remote of all possibilities, it may be useful.

Reader, I have a friend who is labouring under the most extraordinary infatuation that ever conquered the mind of man. I ’ll tell you what it is. He goes, night after night, to Westminster Bridge, carrying with him a large bag full of sovereigns. There, at the centre arch, where the river is deepest, he takes his stand, and deliberately drops his sovereigns into the water : first, one by one ; then, two by two ; then, five by five ; and so on, gradually increasing, till he has given all his money to the Thames’ flounders ! Having duly executed this wise and wonderful manœuvre, and waited a certain time in expectation of the re-ascension of his sovereigns, each with a hundred followers in its train (which reasonable expectation, it is needless to add, is rarely fulfilled), he, with a burning brow, an aching heart, and an empty bag, returns home, makes a solemn vow never again so

to regale the fishes, and the very next night —he repeats the very same process, point by point, from beginning to end.

O Frederick ! my dear friend ! read my Sermon while yet you have a guinea in the world ('twill apply excellently well to your case) : study each asterisk, let each dash sink deep into your heart, and treasure up in your memory every note of admiration. Should it fail (as I fear it will) to wean you from your mad propensity ; or, in the slightest degree, to convince you of the folly and the hopelessness of your pursuit (and, indeed, I have but little reliance on its efficacy) ; send it, O Frederick ! to where the poor remains of your fortune are fast proceeding—irrecoverably, and for evermore, to repose at the bottom of the Thames !

“ Your friend, sir, must be an idiot, or a madman.”

You are wrong, good reader, indeed you are. Putting out of the question the ground afforded for your opinion by his astonishing freaks on Westminster Bridge, my friend is *not* a madman, he is *not* an idiot. He is a man of good, sound, practical sense—one by whose counsel I would willingly be guided in any case of difficulty which might baffle or perplex my own judg-

ment. His learning is profound, his reading various and extensive ; his taste is exquisite, his manners are polished and refined. Yet are all these qualities and advantages insufficient to prevent his nightly visits to that fatal bridge !

He once had a choice collection of pictures : he has thrown every one of them into the Thames ! His bronzes, his marbles, his medals, and his coins, are all given to the insatiable river. Bills, bonds, and mortgages ; nay, trees, houses, land — no matter for the *form* of the property—there it all goes, all, all, all !

“ Psha ! you are attempting to amuse me with an absurd rhapsody.”

Thank’ee, *courteous* reader ; but I am *not* attempting to amuse you with an absurd rhapsody. However, since I perceive you are—excuse the coarseness of the term—a matter-of-fact person, I must abandon the figurative, and “ speak by the card.” My friend, then, is an incorrigible gamester. For Westminster Bridge, read a certain house in St. James’s ; for the Thames, a green-baize table ; for little fishes, great sharks ; and, these substitutions admitted, I insist on it, that I have stated his case with an exactness that would satisfy a

mathematician. The end is, *and must be*, the same: why, then, quarrel respecting the means ?

Again ! You ask me how I can presume to call a medley of stars, dashes, &c. a Sermon on the Fatal Consequences of Gaming ? If you persist in cavilling at trifles ; if you are resolved not to see that which is as clear as the sun at noon-day—I mean, when that phenomenon was observable in London about three weeks ago—we never shall arrive at an understanding. I am a rigid utilitarian, and (in the present instance) I write with a moral purpose. As much as I conceive is requisite to be done in order to produce positive good, so much will I do—no more. Away then with tropes, figures, flowery phrases, and well-turned periods ; pass we the pathetic and sink the sublime : no, not even the matter-of-course rhetorical flourish about heart-broken wives and starving children —the last refuge of your vulgar moralist—shall be perpetrated by my pen. Let me repeat, that I write not for mere *effect*, but with an honest desire to be useful: my object is to “keep a gamester from the dice :” and I appeal to the experience of thousands whether that object is not quite as likely to be accom-

plished by my compendious work, as by any the longest, the wisest, the most eloquent, the most persuasive, that ever issued from the head or heart of philosopher, moralist, or divine.

Who ever thought of relieving a poor creature suffering under hydrophobia by preaching to him a sermon “ On the enormity of allowing oneself to be bitten by a mad dog ?” Who in his senses would expect, by serious remonstrance, to cure a patient afflicted with madness next in degree to it—with that disease of the mind which, for want of a better term, I shall take the liberty to call confirmed gamblomania ? The attempt were hopeless. The poor deluded being is not its master but its slave : his disease is as a passion too strong for his control; as a craving which his nature cannot resist. The confirmed gamester, who stakes his guinea, and another, and another, in the hope of retrieving hundreds lost, is, like the lunatic who shows you the bits of straw, which he is presently to convert into gold—an object more deserving our pity than our contempt.

But not only is he invulnerable to solemn exhortation ; ridicule, which, in most other cases, is effective, falls powerless upon him.

What then can be done to save him ? Nothing —nothing. When the passion, or rather, the mania, has fairly taken hold, it is never to be eradicated. Nothing but the loss of his last shilling, and his total inability to procure another, will either induce or compel the confirmed gamester to abstain from risking *one stake more*. Even then, after all is lost, you may see him pale, haggard, woe-begone, like a spectre, haunting the scene of his ruin : and, with the experience of many a bitter night to counsel him of the hopelessness of the pursuit, still indulging in mad and infallible schemes for the recovery of his losses, should Fortune ever again bestow on him a guinea.

“ Sir,” said an elderly Frenchman to me (an entire stranger) one night at Frascati, “ Sir, I have discovered a system by which I can infallibly break the tables.”

“ Sir,” replied I, “ I wish you joy of it : for my own part, I never play.”

“ Sir, so confident am I of its success, that within these four months I have *embarked* eighteen thousand francs in the game—they are irretrievably lost, unless—really, I—Have the kindness, sir, to lend me a couple of Napoleons for a minute or two, and you

shall see me make an example of these *villains croupiers.*"

Having in me too much of the milk of human kindness to assist in a scheme of such desperate revenge; and this, besides, not being the first request of the kind I had been honoured with, I declined compliance with it.

But, seriously speaking, it never was my intention to be serious on the subject of gaming: a long face is seldom an agreeable object, and, least of all, when it is exhibited to no good purpose. All I designed, in this paper, was to throw together, in a desultory way, a few anecdotes of gaming, which have occurred within my own observation. I give, as it were, the raw material: if it fail of effect in the plain shape of warning, I am convinced that no salutary result would be obtained by working it up into precept.

Though I never in my life won or lost five pounds at play, I was a frequent visiter at Frascati. I went as a looker-on, and, to confess the truth, for the purpose of indulging in the excitement occasioned by watching the various chances and changes of the game, and their effects upon those who were more seriously interested in them. To a mere observer

this excitement is intense: to the player, deeply involved, it must be fearful. I remember a very old gentleman who was daily carried by his servant to the *Rouge-et-noir* table. There he sat playing from three o'clock until five, at which hour precisely the servant returned and carried him (for he had entirely lost the use of his legs) back to his carriage. He was a man of large fortune, and the stakes he played were not considerable; yet he was elated by every lucky *coup*, and at every reverse he gnashed his teeth and struck the table in rage. No sooner, however, had the moment for his departure arrived, than he regained his equanimity—utterly regardless as to whether he had been a winner or a loser by the proceedings. “I have outlived all modes of excitement,” said he, “save that of gaming: it is that that takes the fastest hold on the mind and retains it the longest; my blood, but for this occasional agitation, would stagnate in my veins—I should die.” Here was a man provoking this conflict of the passions simply for his diversion: how must it be with him who sets fortune, life, honour, at stake!

Upon one occasion, I absolutely grew giddy from anxiety, whilst watching the countenance

of an officer of the *Garde-Royale* who stood opposite to me, and waiting the turn of a card which was to decide whether he should, at once, return a beggar to his home, or his certain fate be deferred till a few hours, or a few nights, later. It appeared to be his last stake. The perspiration was falling from his brow, not in drops, but in a stream. He won ; and a friend who accompanied him dragged him out of the room. Some nights afterwards I saw this same person again. He was losing considerably, yet he endured his losses with apparent calmness. Once, when a large stake was swept from him, he just muttered between his teeth, whilst his lips were curled with a bitter smile, “*C'est bien ; très bien.*” After this, he silently watched the game through five or six deals, but did not play. I concluded he had lost all. Suddenly and fiercely he turned to the dealer, and in a tone of voice almost amounting to a scream, he exclaimed, “*C'est mon sang que vous voulez—le voilà.*” He, at the same time, drew from his pocket two notes of five hundred francs each, and, dashing them down on the table, he rushed into a corner of the room, hid his face, covered his ears with his hands, as if dreading to hear the announce-

ment of the result of his speculation, and, literally, yelled aloud ! It was awful ! After a few seconds he returned to his place. His last stake was lost ! He twice drew his handkerchief across his forehead, but he uttered not a word. Presently he asked for a glass of *eau-sucré*, and, having swallowed it, he slowly walked away. The next morning his servant found him sitting in an arm-chair, with his sword, thrust up to the very hilt, sticking in his throat !

This is not the only tale of the kind I could relate ; but, as they are all nearly alike in their progress, and differ in their terminations only, by substituting for this extraordinary method of making an exit, poison, the pistol, or a plunge into the Seine, I consider this one sufficient for my purpose.

Yet let me not be set down as an alarmist—as one anxious to inculcate a belief that *all* confirmed gamesters terminate their career by becoming their own executioners. Such, however, I take to be the current opinion amongst those who live “remote from cities,” and know nothing of what is passing within them but from hearsay.

A gentleman from the north of England

came to see the sights of Paris. He was on what is disagreeably termed the *wrong* side, but which, for the sake of good manners, I shall beg leave to call the *venerable* side, of sixty. He had, for the greater part of his life, inhabited one large town, which was Newcastle; and he had frequently, in the course of it, visited one large city, and that was Durham. He came to Paris, therefore, with a mind admirably blank for the reception of a strong impression of its wonders. Of the *Palais-Royal*, its play-houses, its coffee-houses, its eating-houses, its gaming-houses, &c. and of the amusements and the horrors therein enjoyed and perpetrated, he had heard much; and had formed of the place a notion most amusingly extravagant. Scarcely had he swallowed his first dinner, when he begged I would show him the *Palais-Royal*. Thither we went.

It was evening, and the place was at its gayest. The *cafés* and shops were all illuminated; music burst upon us from the *Salons* above and the cellars beneath; and the garden and arcades were thronged to a degree which would have satisfied a Cockney. Yet Mr. — gazed about him with an air of disappointment. He asked which were the gaming-houses.

"There," said I, pointing to a row of windows, "there is one."

He took a seat immediately in front of the building. I left him ; and, returning in about half-an-hour, found him still there, his eyes intently fixed on the windows.

"Are you *sure*," said he, doubtfully, "that that is a gaming-house ?"

I told him, the place being public, he might convince himself by entering. To this he objected, on the ground that he should not like to be close to any one when he *did it*. I imagined he meant no more than that he did not care to see play. Presently a window was thrown open, apparently for the purpose of airing the room.

"Now, now !" cried Mr. ——, "now some one is coming."

But nobody came, nor could I clearly comprehend who it was my old friend expected. At length the drums beat for clearing the garden, and we withdrew. It was manifest he had suffered a grievous disappointment. After a few minutes' silence, he said: "I hope you have not been trifling with me. I have been *credibly informed* that it is no uncommon thing to see two or three of those unhappy wretches, when

they have lost their all, toss themselves out of window ; and that, if you are there but early enough in the morning, you may be sure of finding five or six of them dangling from the balustrades. *Between ourselves, that is chiefly what I came to Paris to see.*"

Now, although I am satisfied that the gaming-houses contribute largely to the *Morgue*,* yet, for the consolation of all fathers whose sons are incurably addicted to play, I declare that I have known some confirmed gamesters who have lived on to a very disreputable old age.

I saw the Chevalier de la C—— (a descendant of the once-celebrated romance-writer) when he was nearly ninety. The mode of life of this old man was singular. He had lost a princely property by the scheme which my poor friend Frederick is still pursuing. By a piece of good fortune, of rare occurrence to gamesters, and

* The melancholy receptacle for the bodies of those who are found dead in the streets, or in the river, and where they remain till claimed by their relatives or friends.

A certain over-polite Irishman (remarkable for his constant use and frequent misapplication of the conventional phrases of civility) to whom I mentioned that I had that morning seen *eight* unfortunate creatures in the place, replied :—" Pray allow me to ask a thousand pardons, my very dear sir, when I take the liberty to assure you that that is a mere nothing: I have *had the pleasure* of seeing seven-and-twenty there at one time."

oh ! unparalleled generosity ! the proprietors of the *Salon* allowed him a pension to support him in his miserable senility——just sufficient to supply him with a wretched lodging, bread, and a change of raiment once in every three or four years ! In addition to this he was allowed a supper (which was his dinner) at the gaming-house. Thither, at about eleven at night, he went. Till supper-time (two) he amused himself in watching the games and calculating the various chances, although he was destitute of the means of playing a single *coup*. At four he returned to his lodging, retired to bed, and lay till between nine and ten on the following night. A cup of coffee was then brought to him ; and, having dressed himself, at the usual hour he again proceeded to the *Salon*. This had been his round of life for several years ; and he told me that during all that time (excepting on a few mornings about Mid-summer) he had not beheld the sun !

Perhaps the most unhappy event that can befall a person who visits the gaming-table for the first time is that he should retire from it a winner. There appears so little reason why that which has already so easily been done should not with equal facility be repeated, that

it is all but a certainty the fortunate player will make the attempt.

I strolled one night with a friend into Frascati. He was no player any more than myself ; however, he threw out a bait to Lady Fortune of three or four Napoleons. She was kind ; and, in less than half an hour, his pockets were crammed with gold. He wisely resolved to march off with the spoil, and, in that laudable intention, desired the dealer to exchange his gold for notes. After receiving four-thousand-five-hundred francs in paper, there still remained three unlucky Napoleons. "Let 's see what I can do with these," cried F—. He lost them. That was provoking ! Resolved to recover them, he changed one of his notes—then another. In less than ten minutes he left the room without a franc in his purse. Reflecting on the *difficulty* only of quitting the gaming-table a winner, he never played again.

The fate of poor G——m is remembered by many. He was one of the most estimable men I ever knew. In him were combined the best qualities both of head and heart : he was sensible, witty, good-humoured, benevolent. With these qualifications, and one other, which seldom operates to a man's disadvantage—a clear

income of three thousand a-year—the best society in Paris was open to him. He had been a visiter in that capital about a month, when he received an invitation to one of the splendid dinners given weekly at the *Salon*. As he never played, he hesitated about the propriety of accepting it ; but, on the assurance that it would not be expected of him that he should play, and, moreover, as he might not again have so good an opportunity of visiting an establishment of the kind, for the satisfaction of his curiosity he went. He had a few stray Napoleons in his purse : to throw them—just for the good of the house, as he considered it—could hardly be called *play*, so he threw them. Poor fellow ! he left off a winner of fourteen hundred Napoleons. There is no harm in fourteen hundred Napoleons—and so easily won ! He went again—again—and again ; but he was not always a winner.—The end of poor G——m was by no means of so romantic a character as that of the officer of the *Garde-Royale*, which I have related; therefore to notice it after that may, perhaps, be considered an instance of bathos.—Within fifteen months of the moment his hand first grasped the dice-box, he was lying dead in a gaol.

But the termination of poor, foolish B——w's career is still more contemptible—it is ludicrous. This young gentleman, being a fool of the first water, and possessing a property of about four hundred a-year, strutted and swaggered about the good city of Paris, as a foolish young gentleman has an undoubted right to do. He disdained to creep into a gaming-house with half-a-crown in his hand; no; he went into Frascati, dash! with five hundred pounds, resolved at once to *break the tables*. At one period of the evening he was in a fair way of carrying his threat into execution, being a winner of thirty-eight thousand francs (about £1600); he, then, somewhat abated the ferocity of his first intention, and declared that he should be satisfied, *for that night*, as soon as he had made his thirty-eight an even forty. He walked home without a shilling. Notwithstanding this, he reiterated this unfeeling experiment against the devoted tables with terrific rancour. Now, when it comes to a decided struggle, and one party is fully bent on destroying the other, it is tolerably evident that, in the end, one of the two must come off second best. How it fared with the tables will readily be guessed; but the gallant assailant may now

be seen brandishing a yard measure behind a linen-draper's counter in —— Street.

Break the tables? A paltry private fortune — paltry, however large — carried up, *in driblets*, to contend against a joint-stock of wealth enormous! Send a body of a hundred men, in detachments of five or ten men at a time, to annihilate a compact army of a hundred thousand! — Blockheads!

Calculations? It is notorious to you that the calculations are already made, greatly, and confessedly, in favour of the brick wall against which you are sapiently knocking your heads.* But you are right: you expect that the whole doctrine of chances will be subverted in favour of your own especial schemes.—Dolts!

Systems? Observe two players on opposite sides of the table. Each has his infallible system by which he *must* win. Playing on opposite sides, the card which is favourable to one must, of necessity, be fatal to the other: yet mark the air of security with which *both*

* Their splendid mansions, thrown open, free of expense, to all visitors; their dinners, suppers, and balls, gratuitously provided; a tax of many thousands, paid annually to Government for permission to hold the tables:—is it out of *their own* losses, or *your's*, ye deep calculators, that the contractors derive the means of defraying these enormous expences?

(playing on infallible systems) place their money on the board! Can one conceive an act exceeding this for deliberate stupidity?—Idiots!

Talking with H—— C—— (a gentleman well known in the sporting world), of the obvious absurdity of *systems* for winning at games of pure chance—“If I were resolved to win,” said I, “I should go very soberly with a hundred Napoleons, and be content with winning one.”

“That would never do,” was his reply; “you should go, very drunk, with one Napoleon, resolved to win a hundred.”

In a personal conflict between two men of equal stature, strength, and skill, of whom the one is irritable and impatient, whilst the other is cool and collected, the victory must be with the latter. Now, ye profound calculators, ye ingenious system-mongers, admitting your theories to be as rational as, in fact, they are absurd: admitting that you encounter your antagonists on equal terms, instead of conceding, as you do, weighty odds in their favour—there is still against you this one tremendous point, sufficient in itself for your destruction:—According to the various turns of the game,

you are elated, depressed, irritated, perplexed ; your systems — your calculations — where are they ? — **THE TABLE HAS NO PASSIONS !**

O, thou, the venerable father, whose son evinces a propensity for —. But, begging your pardon, I must postpone my solemn address to you till another opportunity. I have an anecdote *à propos* of fathers, which, if I relate it not now, may be lost to the world for ever. In the mean time, for any serious purpose, see my sermon.

It is not long ago that a certain gentleman was sitting, *tête-à-tête*, with a friend, at wine.

“See here,” said the former ; “here is a letter from the tutor of that foolish boy of mine, at Paris. He tells me that Tom has lost nine thousand pounds at play. What a sum ! I ’ll never forgive him.”

“Pounds !” exclaimed his friend, on looking at the letter ; “nine thousand *livres* ; not *livres-sterling*, but ten-pences.”

“What ! only ten-pences ? Hurra ! fill your glass ! I ’ll give him leave to lose as many *ten-pences* as he likes.”

DICK DOLEFUL.

A SKETCH FROM NATURE.

IT was to the late Captain Chronic, R. N., I was indebted for the pleasure of being but very slightly acquainted with Richard Doleful, Esquire.

The father of Dick had, during the Captain's long and frequent absences on service, acted as his agent and factotum : receiving his pay and his prize-money, managing his disbursements, and investing the annual surplus to the best advantage ; and I incline to attribute to old Chronic's kindly and grateful remembrance of the father, rather than to any personal regard for the son, his tolerance of the latter as the almost daily visiter at his house.

Dick's "*good friends*" are "sorry to admit" that there are many bad points about him ; his "*best friends*" compassionate him

into the possession of ten times more: hence it may be inferred that Dick, upon the whole, is a much better person than the best of his friends. Yet even I, who do not presume to be his friend, consequently have no motive for speaking in his disparagement, must allow him to be a very unpleasant fellow. Now, as the term "unpleasant fellow" may be variously interpreted, I would have it distinctly understood that I do not mean to accuse him of ever having thrashed his grandmother, or kicked his father down stairs, or poisoned a child, or set fire to a barn, or burked a female young, beautiful, and virtuous, or encouraged an organ-grinder or a Scotch bagpiper to make a hideous noise under his window, or, in short, of any enormous wickedness; I mean — and whether his case may be rendered better or worse by the explanation must depend upon individual taste—I mean only that he is *a bore*.

For the last three years of his life, the Captain, whose health was gradually declining under the effects of an uncured and incurable wound in the side, had scarcely ever quitted his house; and for a considerable portion of that period he was unable, without assistance, to move from his sofa. In addition to his

sufferings from his glorious wound, he was subject to the occasional attacks of inglorious gout, and of three visits a day from Dick Doleful. Under such a complication of ailments, his case, both by his friends and his physicians, had long been considered hopeless. Indeed the Captain himself seemed aware of the fatal character of the last-named malady; and more than once expressed an opinion that, if he could be relieved from *that*, he had strength and stamina sufficient to conquer the others.

I paid him a visit one day, and entered his room just as Mr. Doleful was leaving it. Doleful sighed audibly, shook his head, muttered “Our poor dear friend!” and withdrew. This, from any other person, I should have construed into a hint that our “poor dear friend” was at his last gasp; but, being acquainted with Mr. Doleful’s ways, I approached the Captain as usual, shook his hand cordially, and, in a cheerful tone, inquired how he was getting on.

“Ah, my dear fellow,” said he, at the same time slowly lifting his head from the sofa-cushion, “I’m glad to see *you*; it does me good; you ask me how I do, and you look and you speak as if you thought there was some life in me. But that Mr. Doleful — !

Here he comes, sir, three times a day ; walks into the room on tiptoe, as if he thought I hadn't nerve to bear the creaking of a shoe ; touches the tip of one of my fingers, as if a cordial grasp would shatter me to atoms ; and says, ‘ Well, how d’ ye do *now*, Captain ? ’ with *such* a look, and in *such* a tone ! — it always sounds to my ears, ‘ What ! ar’ n’t you dead *yet*, Captain ? ’ Then he sits down in that chair ; speaks three words in two hours, and those three in a whisper ; pulls a long face ; squeezes out a tear — his dismal undertaker-countenance lowering over me all the while ! I’m not a nervous man, but — ; ” and here he rose from his sofa, struck a blow on a table which made every article upon it spin, and roared out in a voice loud enough to be heard from stem to stern of his old seventy-four, the Thunderer : — “ I’m not a nervous man ; but d—n *me* if he does n’t sometimes make me fancy I’m riding in a hearse to my own funeral, with him following as chief mourner ! I shall die of him one of these days,” added he, emphatically ; “ *I know I shall.*”

“ He is not exactly the companion for an invalid,” said I : “ the cheerful address of a friend, and his assuring smile, are important

auxiliaries to the labours of the physician ; whilst, on the contrary, the _____."

" Ay, ay ; the *bore* of such visits as his ! They would make a sound man sick, and hasten a sick man to the grave. And, then, that face of his ! I couldn't help saying to him the other day, that, when I shot away the figure-head of the French frigate, *La Larmoyeuse*, I should have liked to have his to stick up in its place."

" It is evident his visits are irksome and injurious to you. Why, then, do you encourage them ? "

" I do n't encourage them, and if he had any feeling he would perceive I do n't ; but *bores* have no feeling. Besides, I can 't altogether help myself. His father was useful to me ; he managed my money-matters at home when I was afloat—a kind of work I never could have done for myself—and so well, too, that I consider my present independence as of his creating. Remembering this, I could not decently toss the son out of window, do you think I could ? Eh ? "

My honest opinion upon the matter being one which might have put the Captain to some trouble at his next interview with the gentle-

man in question, I suppressed it, and merely observed, "Mr. Doleful has told me how useful his father was to you."

"Ay, and so he tells every body, and so he reminds me as often as I see him, and *that's* a bore. Now, I am not an ungrateful man, and am as little likely as any one to forget a friend, or a friend's son ; but, every time this King of the Dismals reminds me of my obligation, I consider the debt of gratitude as somewhat diminished : so that, if I live much longer, the score will be entirely rubbed out, and then, d—n *me*, but I *will* toss him out of window!"

After a momentary pause the Captain resumed :—

"Then, there's another bore of his. We take physic because we are obliged to take it ; it is n't that we like it, you know ; nobody does, that ever I heard of. Now, he fancies that I can't relish my medicine from any hands but his, and he *will* stand by whilst I take my pills, and my draughts, and my powders. Ipecacuanha and Dick Doleful ! Faugh ! two doses at once ! Will you believe it, my dear fellow ? the two ideas are so connected in my mind that I never see physic without thinking of Dick Doleful, nor Dick Doleful without

thinking of physic. I must own I do n't like him the better for it, and that he might perceive. But, as I said before, bores have no feeling—they have no perceptions — they have no one faculty in nature but the faculty of boring the very soul out of your body.”

Seeing me take a book from amongst several which lay on the table, he continued :—

“ Ay ; there 's Mr. Dick again ! I send him to get books to amuse me, and that 's what he brings. Pretty lively reading for a sick man, eh ? Nice things to keep up one's drooping spirits ? There 's ‘Reflections on Death,’ Dodd's ‘Prison Thoughts,’ the ‘Death-bed Companion,’ ‘Hell : a Vision.’ I must have a fine natural constitution to live through all this ! ”

I took my leave of the invalid, and, at the street-door, met Dr. Druggem, his physician, and his surgeon, Sir Slashly Cutmore, who were about to visit him. I mentioned that I had just left their patient suffering under considerable irritation caused by the unwelcome interference of Doleful; and ventured to express an opinion that a hint ought to be given to the latter, of the desirableness of diminishing both the length and the frequency of his visits to the Captain.

"Hint, sir?" said Druggem; "a hint won't do. Slight aperients will have no effect in this case: I am for administering a powerful cathartic: — this Mr. Doleful must be carried off at once—forbade the house, sir."

"I am quite of Mr. Druggem's opinion," said Sir Slashly; "the Captain must instantly submit to the operation; he must consent to the immediate amputation of that Mr. Doleful, or I'll not answer for his life a week."

The next day Mr. Doleful favoured *me* with a visit.

"I call," said he, "to lament with you the unhappy state of 'our poor dear friend,'"—and he burst into a tear.

Now, as I knew that the state of "our poor dear friend" was no worse then than the day before, I interrupted his pathetics, by telling him that I was not in a lamenting mood: and, rather unceremoniously, added that it was the opinion of his medical advisers that the state of "our poor dear friend" might be considerably improved, if he, Mr. Doleful, would be less frequent in his visits, and if, when he did call upon "our poor dear friend," he would assume a livelier countenance.

"Well!—Bless my soul! this is unexpected

—*very* unexpected. *I*—! *Me*—! The son of his friend—his *best* friend! Why—though I say it, had it not been for my poor departed father—[And here he burst into another tear] —I say, had it not been for my poor father, the Captain might, at this moment, have been — Well; no matter—but *Me*!—how *very* odd! I, who sacrifice myself for the poor dear sufferer! with him, morning, noon, and night, though it afflicts me to see him—as he must perceive: he *must* observe how I grieve at his sufferings—he *must* notice how much I feel for him. Why, dear me! What interest can *I* have in devoting myself to him? Thank Heaven, I AM NOT A LEGACY-HUNTER!"

This voluntary and uncalled-for abnegation of a dirty motive placed Mr. Doleful before me in a new light. Till that moment the suspicion of his being incited by any prospect of gain to bore "our poor dear friend" to death had never entered my mind.

Captain Chronic lived on for a twelvemonth, during the whole of which, excepting the very last week, Dick Doleful, in spite of remonstrance and entreaty, continued to inflict upon him his three visits *per diem*. A week before his death, the Captain, who till then had occu-

pied a sofa, took to his bed ; and, feeling his case to be hopeless, and conscious that he had not many days to live, he desired that his only two relations, a nephew and a niece, might be sent for, and that *they alone* should attend him to the last. Dick, greatly to his astonishment, thus excluded from the bed-chamber, still continued his daily three visits to the drawing-room. Upon the last of these occasions, so vehemently did he insist upon seeing his "poor dear friend," that (without asking the Captain's permission) he was allowed to enter his bed-room. The opening of the door awoke the Captain from a gentle slumber into which he had just before fallen. Perceiving Dick, he uttered a faint groan. Dick approached the bed-side, as usual, on tiptoe ; as usual he softly pressed the tip of the Captain's forefinger ; squeezed out the usual tribute of one tear ; and, with the usual undertaker-look, and in the usual dismal tone, he said, "Well, how d'ye do *now*, Captain ?" The Captain faintly articulated, "Dick, Dick, you 've done it at last ! " fell back upon his pillow, and expired !

At about ten o'clock on the same morning, Dick Doleful, looking very like an undertaker's mute, called upon me. He was dressed in

black, and had a deep crape round his hat.
“The dear departed!” was all he uttered.

“Is it all over with the poor Captain, Mr. Doleful?”

“He’s gone! Thank Heaven, I was with the dear departed at his last moments. If ever there was an angel upon earth ——! so good, so kind, so honourable, so every thing a man ought to be. Thank Heaven, I did *my* duty towards the dear departed! This loss will be the death of me. I have n’t the heart to say more to you; besides, the will of the dear departed will be opened at twelve, and it is proper that some disinterested friend should be present at the reading. Good morning. Oh! the dear departed! But he’s gone where he will get his deserts.”

At about two o’clock, Mr. Doleful was again announced. I observed that his hat was dismantled of the ensign of mourning which it had so ostentatiously exhibited but a few hours before. He took a seat, remained silent for several minutes, and then burst into a flood of real, legitimate tears.

“Be composed, my dear sir,” said I; “recollect your grief is unavailing; it will not recal to life the dear departed.”

"The departed be d—d!" exclaimed he, starting in a rage from his chair. "Thank Heaven, I am not a legacy-hunter, nevertheless I *did* expect——! *You* know what I did for the old scoundrel; *you* know what time I sacrificed to him; *you* know how I have watched the hour and minute for giving the old rascal his filthy physic; and yet——! I repeat it, I am not a legacy-hunter; but I put it to you, sir, as a man of sense, as a man of the world, as a man of honour, had n't I a right to expect, a *perfect* right to expect——What should *you* have thought, sir? I merely ask how much should *you* have thought?"

"Why, perhaps, a thousand pounds."

"Of course—to be sure—I am anything but an interested man; and had he left me *that*, I should have been satisfied."

"How much, then, *has* he left you?"

"Guess—I only say do *you* guess."

"Well—five hundred?"

"Why, even *that* would have served as a token of his gratitude; it is n't as money I should have valued it: or had he left me fifty pounds for mourning, why even *that*—or five pounds for a ring, even *that* would have been better than——But, sir, you wo'n't believe

it ; you *can't* believe it : the old villain is gone out of the world without leaving me a farthing ! But I am not disappointed, for I always knew the man. So selfish, so unkind, so hard-hearted, so ungrateful, so dishonourable, so wicked, an old scoundrel — ! If ever there was a devil incarnate, take my word for it he was one. But he 's gone where he will get his deserts."

And, so saying, *Exit* Dick Doleful.

It is but justice to the memory of the Captain to state, that in the body of his will there had stood a clause to this effect :—

"To Richard Doleful, Esq., in testimony of my grateful remembrance of the services rendered me by his late father, I bequeath One Thousand Pounds."

By a codicil of later date, this bequest was reduced to nine hundred ; by a second, to eight hundred ; and so on, by others, till it was reduced to—nothing. Thus had Dick Doleful bored his friend out of his life, and himself out of a legacy.

[WE are entrusted with the Editorship of the following Memoir. As a specimen of *very fine writing indeed*, we consider it to be almost without a parallel — except, perhaps, in some of the good old Minerva-library novels of five-and-twenty or thirty years ago, the tone and style of which it appears to emulate.

With respect to Miss Niobe herself, although we will admit her to be a very unhappy lady, we cannot consider her as being pre-eminently unfortunate, or, indeed, unfortunate at all, except in a propensity to exhibit more frequently than it may be prudent “a proper spirit!” and in the possession of a temper which, however “feminine” and “gentle” it may be, seems not exactly calculated to promote her own happiness. To these two causes, chiefly, we humbly think her “misfortunes” may be attributed.]

THE MOST UNFORTUNATE OF WOMEN ;

OR,

MEMOIRS OF MISS NIOBE SADGROVE.

IT is usual, I believe, for persons who condescend to favour the public with any account of themselves to state in what year they were born. This is a stupid practice, which can answer no purpose but that of gratifying an unwarrantable curiosity. It shall be no rule for me. Suffice it to declare that I have just entered my nine-and-twentieth year, though the desolating effects of sorrow and misfortune, upon a form and features too exquisitely susceptible of rude impressions, might mislead a careless beholder into the belief that I am nearer to thirty. My person, too, being somewhat above the middle size, and seemingly of vigorous construction, would, to some, perhaps, appear better calculated, than in reality it is, to have resisted the shocks it has suffered, and to which, alas ! it soon must fall a victim.

Of my temper it is not for me to speak. Gentleness is the natural attribute of woman ; but, to maintain the dignity of a lady, that gentleness should be supported by what is commonly called “a proper spirit,” and in that, I trust, I am not deficient. I am unmarried ; nor is it my intention ever to enter into that state of doubtful happiness termed matrimony,—unless, indeed, with a partner who, from the few paces of the path of life which grief has spared me, would pluck the thorns, and scatter flowers in their stead. So much for my present condition. Now to turn the eye of retrospection to the past.

I was unfortunate in my birth. I do not mean that I stand in that interesting predicament which leaves one in any doubt concerning the author of one’s being, to express which so many softening circumlocutions have been invented : I do not mean that my mother had any need to describe herself by so delicate a periphrasis (for which we are indebted, I believe, to a French artist) as that of “the mother of the daughter of Mr. Sadgrove;”*—no ; my

* A French painter a few years ago exhibited a head of a Roman female, which he politely described as *La mère des fils de Brutus*.—EDITOR.

misfortune consists in having been defrauded, as it were, of that rank in life for which—if I know myself—Nature clearly intended me.

My mother, whose mind, like my own, was enthusiastically romantic—open, consequently, to all the more tender influences of all the more refined passions—was the daughter of a citizen, reputed wealthy, and was one of many children. Her father was not exactly what is termed a merchant : Fate had placed him to preside over one of those repositories which administer to the demands made by the necessities of man upon the innocent and fleecy tribe.* He was one of those beings without a soul, who, in the establishment of their children, look solely to what, in their vulgar jargon, they term their welfare and an advantageous settlement. Not so my sainted mother. Plutus was not the god of her idolatry ; over *her* heart Cupid reigned supreme.

At one of those entertainments which almost realize the tales of enchantment in the “ Ara-

* So much do we admire fine writing, that we care little whether it be intelligible or not. Fine writing is a rare commodity, and the main object is to get it. Our fair correspondent leaves us in doubt as to whether her grandfather was a woollen-draper or a mere dealer in fleecy hosiery. Indeed, we take great credit to ourselves for guessing that he was either.—**EDITOR.**

bian Nights" — a ball given by the Pewterers' Company—there sat beside her a young Scotch nobleman. It was Lord Gotnorhino. He was handsome, fascinating, and a cornet of dragoons. To behold each other was to love. They danced together. At parting, he pressed her hand ; and, in accents soft and gentle as the southern breeze, whispered an assignation for the morrow at the corner of Aldermanbury. The lovers met. Few were the words of the enthusiastic and enterprising Gotnorhino. His Lordship instantly proposed to wed her, frankly avowing that, except for his pay, his obligations to the blind goddess who rules our destinies were but small. Yet, with what noble disinterestedness did he offer to share his rank and title with her, provided her father would bestow upon her ten thousand pounds, to guard *her* fragile form from the ills of poverty—reckless, himself, of all !

To her sire himself did my mother refer the noble youth. My trembling hand almost refuses its office whilst I trace the withering reply of the stern and obdurate parent :— “Never, my Lord, with my consent !” exclaimed he ; “never !” adding, in an idiom which gave terrific force to his refusal—“And

I tell your Lordship what : if that 'ere girl of mine takes and marries a beggarly Scotch lord, what has n't got a guinea to bless himself with, she never sees a brass farden of my money."

My mother, regardless of consequences, would have rushed with her noble suitor, borne on the wings of Love, to the world's end ; but he, disinterested to the last, for her happiness sacrificed his own, and (to drown in oblivion the bitterness of disappointed love) shortly afterwards married the daughter of the wealthy Alderman Wicks.

The early blossoms of love having been thus rudely wrenched from her bosom by the iron hand of paternal tyranny, the lacerated heart of my mother became for ever callous to the touch of Cupid's shafts. Who then shall wonder that, in apathetic obedience to the will of her sire, she submitted to be led to the hymeneal altar by Jeremiah Sadgrove, her father's favourite clerk—his partner not long after ! Of that cruel union I am the sole offspring. Thus was I, by the stern decree of sordid avarice, forbade to burst upon the world a noble's daughter, and doomed to take my station as a tradesman's. Thus am I—" me miserable!"—who should have been the Hon.

Miss Gotnorhino, nought, nought, alas ! but the humble Niobe Sadgrove. O ! ye who—— But, no : as I cannot hope for sympathy, so will I seek none. Singular is my misfortune ; few, few can sympathize with ills they cannot know : for me alone a disappointment so bitter and irremediable was reserved ; in the solitude of my own bosom, therefore, shall my lamentations live.

My parents dwelt in Aldermanbury. In the opinion of an unthinking world, they lived happily together. Ah ! how little can we judge of others' happiness ! They passed their lives, indeed, in ease, and comfort, and monotonous content ; and, such pleasures and amusements as it came within their means to enjoy, it must be owned they partook of. It must be acknowledged, too, that they submitted to each other's wishes and desires with tame acquiescence, so that it is true the voice of discord was seldom heard beneath their roof. But is this the happiness which souls refined aspire to ? Where were the loves and graces which dance around and accompany the steps of those whose fond hearts are bound together with roseate wreaths ? Where was Venus to beckon them to her dove-drawn car ? Where

Somnus to strew poppies on their nightly couch ! — or Aurora, with purple fingers, to draw their morning curtain, and awaken them to a day of Arcadian delight ? Alas ! they were not in Aldermanbury !

It was in this dark region of connubial contentedness I was doomed to pass the earlier years of my life. How little suited to a heart whose every nerve was formed to thrill at the lightest touch of sentiment !

As Misfortune presided at my birth, so did she accompany even my first faltering steps in life !

An only child, I was the adored of my parents. On me their tenderness, like a gentle river, flowed in one soft, uninterrupted course. I was the sole object of their care. In me were centered their every present joy — their every future hope. Yet, alas ! how little could *they* appreciate a mind — a heart like mine ! Such of the common wants and wishes of childhood as *they* could understand were gratified as soon as formed ; but numerous were the desires conceived by my ardent and aspiring soul which met with no responding or complying chord in their's. Thwarted in these, my indignant soul would fly for shelter beneath

the shadow of its own gloom. At other times, tears, copious and impetuous as the mountain-torrent, have gushed from my burning lids ; whilst my screams, like the voice of a storm startled from its slumber, would waken Echo in her silent cave. Again ; how oft have I rejected that sustenance which our baser nature requires for the preservation of existence, till my parents, in alarm for my life, have yielded a tardy and ungraceful compliance with my wishes—if accomplishable ! and if (as a consequence of my enthusiastic temperament it was not unfrequently the case) they were impossible of fulfilment, I have, in the end, retired, in dignified submission, obedient to the superior will of fate. Thus early was I initiated in grief ! Thus early, too, did I manifest that proper spirit which never, under any circumstances, has deserted me, and which alone enabled me to endure the bitter sorrows of that trying period of my life.

In the twelfth year of my miserable life, the direction of my mind and the formation of my manners were consigned to the care of Mrs. Allstarch, mistress of Elysium House, a seminary for young ladies, situate in Hog-Lane, Hackney. My father's object in dismissing

me from the paternal roof, and placing me under the guidance of a stranger, was to subdue that grandeur of spirit (for which, from earliest infancy, I was remarkable) beneath whose overpowering ascendancy his grovelling soul sank abashed. Misguided man ! Was it his intention to rack with wretchedness the heart of the sole offspring of the house of Sadgrove, he but too fatally succeeded ! But who shall control the workings of a superior nature ! The majesty (may I use the word ?) of my character displayed itself in the society of which I was now a member, as it had done elsewhere ; and the attempts on the part of Mrs. Allstarch to overpower it inflicted many a deep wound on my poor, tender heart, whilst the end she idly aimed at was far beyond her power to attain. Conscious of my own dignity, I proudly resolved that, in all things, my will should be paramount. This resolution did not coincide with the mean-spirited regulations of the establishment. A struggle — a desperate collision — was the result, of which (need I say ?) I — I, alas ! was the unhappy victim. The fluttering dove, writhing within the destructive clutch of the remorseless vulture, is a type all too faint of my sufferings in this

detested prison-house. Oh ! in her treatment of me, had the misjudging directrix of Elysium House considered the bias of my nature, then had I passed the hours, from rosy morn till twilight grey, in ineffable delight ; innocently straying from field to field, wandering through alleys green, and treading with lightsome foot the meadow's flowery carpet ; indulging in day-dreams of romance and fairy visions of bliss, till the sable finger of Night should beckon me to my couch. But, no ! with voice imperious would she summon me to the task of passing the glittering and tiny steel in various involutions through the gauzy web ; or, harder still ! to burden a mind formed for Reflection's finest influences with tasks composed of dull, disgusting *ographies*. Then would arise that proper spirit within me ! The unhemmed kerchief flew in fragments on the floor ! the hated volume, scattered in separate leaves, fell, like the trophies of the autumnal gales, in copious showers around ! Then would the tyrant of the school-room, seizing my little arm, drag me with violence to a dungeon-darkened room, and — nor tears nor screams availing — there in loneliness immure me, till hunger forced me to compliance with her harsh

decree. Once, and but once, she dared to raise against me a chastising hand ; but, ere the blow could descend, with a proper spirit—which even in that moment of danger did not forsake me—I had seized an inkstand and hurled it at her head ! Within three hours of this event, I once more found myself beneath the paternal roof : miserable, it is true ; but with a spirit still towering above misfortune.

I pass over many years of grief and suffering, (attributable all to the incapacity of my poor grovelling father—for my sainted mother, having long since been buried in Cripplegate Church, had flown on angelic pinions to a better world—either to estimate or understand the wants and wishes of a being like myself,) till I arrive at the twentieth year of my age.

Having, by servile application to his vulgar trade, amassed a considerable quantity of filthy dross, my father resolved to retire into private life. A long residence in Aldermanbury had almost rendered life loathsome to me. Informed by my father of his intentions to quit its murky purlieus, I thus addressed him :—

“ Since, my father, we are, at length, to spread our pinions to the gale, and hie us from this hated spot, in what direction must we wing our flight ? ”

Alas ! the poetry of expression was ill adapted to a mind like his. He answered not. I framed my question in a way more suited to his mean capacity.

" Since we are to leave Aldermanbury, papa, where are we to go and live ? "

" At Clapham Common," he replied. " I have bought a snug bit of a box there."

My heart sank within me. My visions had been of Bloomsbury, and these were to be dispelled by a single word. It was in vain I threw myself at his feet ; it was in vain that, with dishevelled hair, tears flowing in briny torrents from my eyes, hands clasped in agony, and a bosom bursting with intolerable grief, I implored him to recall the dreadful mandate. The iron heart of my sire was inaccessible to pity ; and, more dead than alive, in helpless unconsciousness, my fragile form was placed in the Clapham stage.

O, that in this sweet insensibility it had been permitted me to wear away the remnant of my hapless existence ! But, no ; relentless Fate willed it otherwise : and I soon awoke to the bitter certainty that I was the sad inmate of Lake-of-Como Cottage, opposite the duck-pond, Clapham Common—and the most unfortunate of women !

But the bearded wielder of the scythe is the friend of the afflicted. Though never happy, I, at length, after a lapse of four years, grew reconciled to my seclusion. A carriage to bear my attenuated form from spot to spot—to where it might have met the health-restoring breeze—to where the softest zephyrs play—to where Nature exists in her sweetest aspect, and where she assumes her greenest garment—a carriage might, perhaps, have given me a taste of that happiness it has never been mine to know. But again were my wishes thwarted by a hard father. Even here, in his chosen retirement, was he still the votary of Plutus. He refused the indulgence his only child solicited: yes, with calculating coldness he refused it. And, oh! the words, the manner, pierced deeper into a soul like mine—a soul above all sordid thoughts and cares—deeper even than the deprivation they announced.

“We have a comfortable house over our heads,” he exclaimed; “we have a comfortable joint on table every day; we have a comfortable bottle of wine on Sundays; we keep two maids, a boy, and a donkey for your own riding, if you were not too proud for it;—besides which you will have three thousand pounds when

you marry, and the rest of my money when I die : but, if you think that I can keep a carriage out of six-hundred a-year, you must be mad."

Mad ! Ah ! no. Reason, alas ! still kept possession of her throne.

I was now to endure the pangs inflicted by the dart of Love. A ball and banquet invited the thoughtless votaries of pleasure to the "Horns," at Kennington. Tempted by Terpsichore, in evil hour, I consented to join the giddy throng. The gorgeous saloon, resplendent with light, and echoing to the sounds of music and of mirth, threw open its portals to receive me. Leaning on the arm of my sire, (my face and figure rendered interesting, perhaps, by the touch of sorrow,) I entered.

Scarcely had I taken my seat when a young man of gallant bearing, beautiful as the god of day, and attired in the uniform of the Loyal Kennington Volunteers,* accompanied by the master of the ceremonies, approached me. In

* We would not be severe in checking a lady's arithmetic, especially when it concerns so delicate a question as her age. Miss Niobe Sadgrove has acknowledged to nine-and-twenty. Now, it appears that she was *twenty* at the period when she quitted "the murky purlieus of Aldermanbury." It appears, also, that it was *four* years ere, by the aid of "the bearded wielder of the scythe," she grew reconciled to her seclusion at Clapham. Twenty and four, if we are not mistaken, make

a voice soft as the music of the spheres, he invited me to join the mazy dance and trip it on the light fantastic toe. My father looked assent, and I consented. From that instant Captain Pringle, of the Kennington Volunteers, became the idol of my adoration.

We danced, and, oh ! —— But it is beyond the power of language to describe the sensations experienced by a heart like mine, as, with unceasing assiduity, the heroic son of Mars, to renovate my drooping spirits, proffered the crystal goblet fragrant and fuming with aromatic punch, which, accepted from his hand, seemed of more than nectarian sweetness ; whilst at each return with the replenished cup he whispered words of softest import in my ear. My youthful heart, for the first time swallowing in copious draughts the pleasing poison of a new-born love, became intoxicated with the till now inexperienced passion, and reeled in giddiness beneath its influence. O Cupid ! God of Love ! is it in this tumultuous guise thou first dost visit thy votaries ? From

twenty-four. Again, the Loyal Kennington Volunteers were disbanded upwards of five-and-twenty years ago. Twenty-four and twenty-five make —— But, as we have said, we will not be severe in a matter of such delicate arithmetic.—
EDITOR.

that moment all was illusion. The brilliant lustres appeared to dance in doubled splendour around me ; each human form assumed a duplicate appearance ; the orchestral harmonies rushed on my ear in unintelligible chaos ; and when I was summoned to quit the glittering throng, my tottering knees refused their wonted office. Supported on one side by the venerable author of my being, and, on the other, by him, the gallant youth to whom these new emotions owed their birth, I was led from the Temple of Pleasure to the glass coach we had hired for the night. O Cupid,* such is thy work !

Next day the hour of three still found me firmly locked in the arms of Morpheus ; nor was it till the ever-moving finger of the dial pointed unerringly to four (our usual dining-hour) that I was summoned from my couch. My poor head, like the troubled ocean, distracted by the various recollections of the evening past, and aching with the intensity of my emotions, I descended to the saloon where our frugal board was usually spread.

I entered the room—and the form of Captain Pringle met my eyes ! He was no longer attired in the fiery livery of the God of War,

* *Query—O Punch ! Editor.*

but, in its stead, his graceful person exhibited a coat of peaceful blue and nankeen pantaloons. The marked attention of this early visit touched me to the very soul ; and when, in tenderest accents, he expressed a hope that I was “ better”—albeit that particular word conveyed no precise meaning to my mind—my tongue faltered, and my young heart fluttered, as I answered—“ Yes.”

But, oh ! with what rude haste did my father betray to him a daughter’s feelings when first inspired by the tenderest of passions !

“ Captain,” exclaimed he, “ you are the first that ever saw my Niobe in that condition.”

The Captain modestly cast his eyes to the ground.

“ You were the cause of it, too,” continued my indiscreet parent, “ by being so attentive to her.”

I felt my cheek suffused with crimson blushes.

“ And then, Captain, you made it so plaguy hot and strong, no wonder it was too much for the girl.”

I forgave my father the coarseness of thus characterizing the ardour of the Captain’s addresses to me, in favour of the acquiescence it implied in his suit.

From this time the Captain became as frequent a visiter at Lake-of-Como Cottage as his military duties, and another occupation he was engaged in (the precise nature of which I do not at this moment recollect *), would allow.

Ere many weeks had passed into the devouring gulph of time, the gallant youth made a formal proposal for my hand. My sire smiled benignly on his suit. The day was fixed which should give my martial suitor a husband's right to draw his sword in my defence—that day on which the torch of Hymen was to be lighted on the altar of Love !

As the day approached, which, alas ! was fated by destiny never to arrive, all Nature seemed to rejoice ; the heavens themselves looked propitious on the coming event, which, ah ! no, never was to come ! and so certain seemed our happiness, that my surviving parent, in the plenitude of his delight, bespoke a goose for the wedding-dinner. Ah ! what are human projects ! And who shall deny that *I am the most unfortunate of women ?* Three

* It happens fortunately that in this instance we can assist the fair lady's memory. Captain Pringle's "other occupation" was that of retailing bobbin, tape, ribbons, pins, and needles : he kept a haberdasher's shop in the Borough.—EDITOR.

days only prior to that on which my Pringle was to have called me his, my gallant lover joined our frugal board. In converse sweet, our approaching bliss the theme, we wiled away our lightsome hours till tea-time. My sire, as was his custom, had sunk into a soft slumber. The Captain held my hand gently compressed in his. For a few moments we were silent, lost in reverie. Pringle was the first to speak; and, in a mood more serious than he was wont, he thus (in substance, at least,) addressed me:—

“My Niobe, my dear Niobe, when the separate streams of our lives shall be combined, and turned into one channel, I doubt not—I trust—I hope, they will flow on in pellucid smoothness, unbroken and untroubled by the envious shoals of discord.”

“And can you doubt it, my Pringle?” said I, inquiringly.

“There is but one thing,” continued he, “that throws the shadow of apprehension over the dazzling brightness of the picture; and the thought of that,” he added, with a long and deep-drawn sigh—“the mere thought of *that* makes me uncommon uncomfortable: it is *that temper of your's.*”

Although upon many occasions it had been evident that my disposition, manifesting itself in its native and unrestrained dignity, had appalled the soul even of the Captain himself, this was the first time he had ever ventured to speak upon the subject. For a moment I stood astound: but soon a proper spirit came to my aid, and, in a voice of fearful energy, I exclaimed :—

“Do n’t talk like a fool, Pringle; but wake papa, and let ‘s go to tea !”

With these words I rushed from the room; and the door, closing behind me with a sound like thunder, applauded, as it were, this just expression of my rage.

But the feminine softness of my nature, soon acquiring a gentle ascendancy over my justly excited anger, with the sweet smile of forgiveness playing in dimples round my mouth, I returned to the parlour. Still my lover sat silent and gloomy; and, though he accepted from my hand the fragrant infusion of the Asian herb, the buttered muffins and the Yorkshire cakes alike retired, untasted, from his lips.

In the hope of dissipating the gloom, my considerate sire proposed a rubber at three-

handed whist, with dummy. Dummy was allotted to my father ; the Captain and I, as usual—for our interests, like our hearts, were one—played together. The points were three-pence and the bet a shilling. It is not in the power of the more common evils of life to disturb my equanimity ; yet where is the soul which will not shake when assailed by the shafts of ill-fortune at cards ? We lost the first rubber. With girlish playfulness I bantered my lover on his stupidity. He replied not. We lost a second. “ Some natural tears I shed ; ” and, with well-feigned anger, I exclaimed, “ Pringle, you are a downright—donkey ! ” Fortune now smiled propitious on us : we wanted but one trick to win the rubber—when the Captain revoked ! and, ere I could call reflection to my aid, kings, queens, knaves, aces, all had winged their flight full in his astonished face.

I retired to my couch, but not to sleep : sad forebodings of some impending ill still kept me waking. And if, perchance, a short and feverish slumber fell over me, it was to dream of gentle and confiding hearts trampled on by man—inconstant, fickle man ! Then, methought, I saw my gallant suitor dressed in the

garb of war (even as I had first beheld him), advancing with his exterminating blade to slay me. Then, methought, I saw him, in the hopelessness of despair, leading the Kenningtonian phalanx to death and sure destruction. Then, methought — but, oh! let it suffice that I awoke to the realization of my direst forebodings.

When I entered the saloon where we were wont to take our earliest matin meal, my father put into my trembling hand a letter which he had just received. With what emotions did I recognise the well-known hand! 'Twas Pringle's! My frame agitated like a rose-bud exposed to all the warring winds of heaven, I read : —

"My dear father-in-law as was to have been ;

"Being a military man, and naturally fond of a quiet life, besides other matters to attend to, cannot think, after what occurred last night, &c., we should get on happy together — Miss Niobe, I mean, and me. His Majesty's service (except in case of invasion, when I shall naturally disband myself,) requires all the time and attention I can give *out of business*, (and business must always be *tantamount* to a prudent man;) and such fatigue requires a QUIET HOME

after the evolutions of the day to relax oneself, which I see no chance of deriving with your daughter. So, as a man of business, it is best to be candid in time, and break. Sorry for all trouble, and, with affectionate love to Miss Niobe, believe me your dutiful son-in-law as was to have been,

“SAMUEL PRINGLE.

“Borough High Street, and Capt. L.K.V.

“P.S.—As the goose, &c., is bespoke for the wedding-dinner, which now won’t be wanted, it is natural I should cheerfully be at half the expense—provided the poultorer won’t hold it back.”

My feelings, on the reading of this cruel epistle, may be more easily conceived than described; nor even can they be conceived save by those whose gentle and pure affections—the first overflowings of a heart (like mine) formed for tenderness and love—have been rudely nipped in the bud.

Thus cruelly betrayed—thus basely deserted by him whom my young heart* had selected

* With the militia and the yeomanry against us, we still abstain from a rigid calculation of Miss Sadgrove’s own personal age. Admitting, therefore, that (according to her own declaration) she herself is not yet *thirty*; yet, “putting this and that together,” it is quite clear to us that her “young heart,” even at the period in question, could not have been much younger than *thirty-two*.—EDITOR.

from out the mass of mankind to be its companion in the thorny walk of life—the perfidy of the false yet still beloved Pringle struck deep into a soul like mine; and brought me to the brink of that grave whose peaceful shelter, even now, unpitying Fate denies me.

Years passed slowly on; and (respecting the sanctuary of my grief!) no suitor e'er intruded.* My spirit, like the stricken deer, then took refuge in itself; † and, with proud resolve, I determined never more to listen to the deluding voice of man, even though issuing from the lips of London's Lordly Mayor.

But now a blow, unparalleled in the black annals of misfortune, awaited her whom the dark goddess has still selected as a target for the aim of her most piercing shafts. My sire, my sainted sire, his venerable head bending beneath the silvery trophies of winters seventy and seven, two months, and fourteen days, was by the ruthless hand of the grim destroyer torn

* Might not some latent apprehension of a revoke at the point of nine have occasioned this respect for the lady's grief?—EDITOR.

† Fine writing, in our estimation, covers a multitude of sins. It is for this reason we offer no objection to this simile, or to various other rhetorical flourishes, not quite reducible to the understanding, which have occurred in the course of these interesting notices.—EDITOR.

from my side ; leaving me, his hapless, helpless child, mistress of myself, and of about six-hundred a-year in the Long Annuities — “that heritage of woe,” as my favourite, the poet of grief, expresses it.*

‘Touched by my sorrow and my solitary state, lovers now came in legions to console me. But, oh ! once crossed in love, how shall the craving void of a heart like mine be satisfied ? One Pringle only issued from the hand of Nature ; and to him, my soldier-love, my soul still turns in pleasing, painful recollection. Alone, and unprotected, seven offers from amongst the gay and gallant throng who have sought my hand, it is true, I have in turn accepted. But, ere the day which should witness the surrender of my liberty arrived, that proper spirit which has still protected me has driven the aspiring tyrants from the flowery field of love. Formed in the finest mould of sensibility, my gentle heart flutters in trepidation at the lightest

* With every disposition to sympathize with the sorrows of Miss Niobe Sadgrove, we really cannot consider the loss of her worthy father as an event “unparalleled in the black annals of misfortune :” on the contrary, we could state instances of a similar calamity occurring in a great many respectable families. As to her being left a “helpless child,” again our compassion is at fault; for children of her mature age are usually able to take tolerable care of themselves. With

breath of man's dominion : but, oh ! could I find a youth submissive to the rosy fetters of my soft sway, his soul attuned in all to harmonize with mine ; who, still obedient to the meek dictates of a heart too mildly feminine, would lead my fragile frame to the nigh goal of life's soon-terminating race ; then only, and for brief space, might I cease to claim distinction as the **MOST UNFORTUNATE OF WOMEN.**

respect to the quotation, "That heritage of woe," which the lady applies to a legacy of six-hundred a-year in the Long Annuities, we apprehend there must be some mistake: at least, we never knew, or heard of, any poet who would so consider a very pretty little income. If the lady's "favourite poet of grief" be Lord Byron, the noble bard certainly has

"Lord of himself, that heritage of woe!"

But——Bless us ! we perceive the cause of the mistake. The lady has favoured us with her quotation a little too late in the sentence. She means, "Mistress of myself, 'that heritage of woe.'"—**EDITOR.**

A COCKNEY'S RURAL SPORTS.

"Guns, horses, dogs, the river, and the field,
These like me not."

ANON.

I WAS lately invited by a French gentleman to pass a few weeks with him at his chateau in the Auxerrois, at fifty leagues from Paris.

As I am fond of the country, and Monsieur De V——, moreover, being an excellent fellow, I did not long hesitate in accepting his invitation. Ah! when I pronounced the fatal "*Oui*," little did I suspect that, by the uttering of that one word, I had devoted myself to a week of bitter suffering. But that the tortures I endured may be fully appreciated, it is necessary to state what are my notions of the country, and what my occupations and amusements there.

The country, then, is a place where, instead of thousands of houses rising about us at every

turn, only one is to be seen within a considerable space ;—where the sky is presented in a large, broad, boundless expanse, instead of being retailed out, as it were, in long strips of a yard-and-a-half wide—where the trees grow naturally and in abundance—by dozens in a clump—and are of a fresh, gay, healthy green, instead of being stuck about, here and there, sad exiles from their native forests, gasping to refresh their lanky forms with a puff of air caught from above the chimney-tops, smoke-dried, sun-burnt, and covered with urban dust, the sack-cloth and ashes of the unhappy mourners ;—where, for flags and pebbles, one is provided with the soft and beautiful tessellations of nature ;—where the air may be respired without danger of suffocation — and the rivers run clear water instead of mud. This is the country.

Its pleasures are to sit still in a quiet room during the early hours of the morning ; then to stroll forth and ramble about—always within sight of the house—avoiding long walks, and the society of all such walkers as compute their pedestrian excursions by miles ; then to sit down in some shady place with a book in one's hand, to read, ruminate, or do neither ; then

to take a turn into the farm-yard, and look at the fowls, or throw crumbs into the duck-pond ; then to walk leisurely to the bridge, lean over the parapet, and watch for hours together the leaves, twigs, and other light objects, floated through it by the stream, occasionally spitting into the water—the quintessence of rural ease and idleness !—and so on the livelong day.

These are my notions of the country, and of the pleasures it affords ; and though my late excursion has instructed me that other pleasures than those I have enumerated exist, to me they present no charms ; they are adapted to tastes and habits, far different from mine. I never loved them ; and now, for the sufferings they have recently occasioned me, I hate, loathe, and detest, them, and cling with increased fondness to my own first ideas of rural enjoyment. Would I had but been allowed the undisturbed indulgence of them !

The evening for our departure arrived. We took the diligence to Auxerre. At intervals, during our nocturnal progress, I was saluted with a friendly tap on the back, accompanied with the exclamation, “ *Ah, ça, mon ami, nous nous amuserons, j’espère.* ” This brought

to my mind pleasant anticipations of my friend's clumps, his meadows, and his silver streams.

Daylight opened to us the prospect of a delightful country. Every now and then a hare scampered across the road, or a partridge winged its way through the air. On such occasions Monsieur De V—— would exclaim, “*Vois-tu ça, mon cher?*” his eyes sparkling with delight. This I attributed to his fondness for roasted hares and partridges, and promised myself a plentiful regale of them ; little did I foresee the torments these reptiles were to occasion me.

Owing to some unusual delays on the road, on our arrival at Auxerre, we found that we were too late for the regular coach to Vilette, the place of our destination. “*C'est un petit malheur,*” said my companion—(a Frenchman is so happily constituted that he seldom encounters a *grand malheur*) :—“It is but fifteen leagues to Vilette, and at nine this evening we will take the *Patache.*”

Now the *Patache*, though a very commodious travelling-machine, is not quite so easy in its movements as a well-built English chariot, nor as a post-chaise, nor as a taxed-cart, nor, indeed, as a common English road-waggon. It

is a square box without springs, fastened flat down upon poles, and dragged along upon two heavy, ill-constructed wheels. The night was dark ; our route lay along a bye-road, (not paved, but) covered with large stones, thrown loosely and carelessly along it, and our driver was half drunk and half asleep. We were jolted to the right and to the left, backwards, forwards, bumped up to the roof, and, in heavy rebounds, down again upon the hard seat. It was making a toil of a pleasure. For some time we laughed, or affected to laugh, but at length our sufferings grew too real for a jest. We were bruised from head to foot, and our situation was not rendered more agreeable by the reflection that it was without remedy. “*C'est égal,*” exclaimed my friend, in the intervals between his groans. I did not find it so.

After five hours' pulverising, at two o'clock in the morning, and having made but little progress on our journey, our driver stopped at a miserable village, and resolutely refused to proceed any farther till daybreak.

“*N'importe,*” said Monsieur De V—, “that will allow us an hour and a half's rest, *et ça sera charmant.*”

Charming ! What is there so perversely tormenting as the short period of *unrest* thrust upon one in the course of a fatiguing journey ? It is scarcely sufficient to recover one from the state of feverish agitation excited by long-continued motion, and which it is necessary to subdue before sleep will operate ; and, the instant it begins to do so, one is cruelly dragged forth again. However, anything was better than the *Patache*. I was lifted out, for I was totally deprived of the power of self-exertion. At daybreak I was lifted in again ; and at eleven o'clock of the third day after our departure from Paris, we arrived at Vilette. " And now," exclaimed my friend, " *Nous nous amuserons !*"

I passed the whole of that day on a sofa, and at night I slept soundly. The next morning, after arranging my writing-materials on a table, I selected a book as my intended companion in my rambles, put pencil and paper into my pocket, that I might secure such bright ideas as I doubted not the country would inspire, and went into the breakfast-room.

A party of ladies and gentlemen, visitors at Vilette, were already assembled. The repast ended, this was Monsieur De V——'s address to me :

“ *Maintenant, mon cher, nous nous amusons.* You are an Englishman, consequently a fine sportsman. You will find here everything you can desire. Fishing-tackle, dogs, guns, horses — *par exemple*, you shall ride Hector while you stay—no one here can manage him, but *you'll* soon bring him to reason. *Allons!* we'll ride to-day. *Sacristi!* Hector will fly with you twelve leagues an hour ! Only remember that, as we shall not be equally well mounted, you must keep him in a little, that we may not lose the pleasure of your conversation by the way.” Then, turning to some others of the party, he said, “ The English are in general better horsemen than we ; *il n'y a pas de comparaison, Messieurs; vous allez voir.*”

This was an unexpected blow. I wished the earth would open and hide me in its deepest recesses. I, who had never in my life caught a flounder ! I, who had never pulled a trigger to the annoyance of beast or bird ! I, who had never performed any very extraordinary equestrian feat, suddenly called upon “ to witch the world with noble horsemanship,” and sustain the sporting credit of England !— I, who am the exact antipode to Colonel

Th——n,* and stand at opposite points of pre-eminence with him : he being the very best sportsman in the world, and I the very worst, —a superiority which, in each case, leaves competition so far behind, that I have sometimes been proud of mine.

Now it availed me nothing. What would I not have given for my great opposite's dexterity of hand, his precision of eye, his celerity of foot ! How did I envy him his power of riding more miles in a minute than any horse could carry him ! How did I yearn to be able, like him, to spit, with a ramrod, a dozen partridges flying, or angle with six hooks upon the same line, and simultaneously catch a pike of twenty pounds weight with each !

These were vain longings, and something was necessary to be *done*. It seemed to me that the equestrian honour of England was confided to my keeping, and depended on my exertions that day ; and, with the desperate reflection that, at the worst, I should be quits for a broken neck, I went with the rest into the court-yard, where the horses were waiting for us. I must here beg permission to digress ;

* For a sketch of this once-celebrated person, *vide COLONEL NIMRON*, in the paper entitled *EMINENT LIARS*, vol. i. p. 55.

for that my readers may fully appreciate the horrors of my situation, their attention to my equestrian memoirs is indispensable. I will be as brief as possible.

Till somewhat an advanced period of my life, *learning to ride* had always appeared to me a superfluous part of education. Putting one foot into the stirrup, throwing the other across the saddle, and sitting astride it, as I had seen many persons do, seemed to me to be the mere work of intuition, common matter of course, as easy and as natural to man as walking. Having principally inhabited the capital, horse-riding, as a thing of necessity, had never once occurred to me. I had never considered it as a recreation ; and my journeys, whether of business or pleasure, I had always performed in carriages. Thus had I attained the age of manhood — confirmed manhood, reader ! — without ever having mounted a horse ; and this, not from any suspicion that I was incompetent to the task, nor from any unwillingness to the effort, but simply, as I have said, from never having experienced the absolute necessity of so doing.

It happened that I was chosen one of a numerous party to Weybridge, in Surrey ; —

alas ! though but very few years have elapsed since then, how are its numbers diminished ! Death has been fearfully industrious among us ; and the few whom he has spared are separated from each other, some by intervening oceans, others by the wider gulph formed by the decay of friendship, the withering of affection.—No matter.

On the eve of our departure, it was discovered that all the places in the carriages would be occupied by ladies : each man, except myself, was provided with a horse, and the important question arose — “ How is P. to get there ? ” It was soon settled, however, by some one saying, “ Oh ! I ’ll lend him a horse ; ” and my accepting his proposition, and thanking him for his civility, in just the same tone of *nonchalance* as if he had offered me a place in a post-chaise. No doubts, no misgivings, concerning the successful result of the morrow’s undertaking came across me : I had nothing to do but get upon a horse, and ride him to Weybridge.

That night I slept soundly ; the next morning I rose in a placid state of mind, ate my breakfast as usual, and conducted myself with becoming decency and composure till the appointed hour of starting. I was the first at

the place of rendezvous. The horse intended for me was led to the door, I walked towards it with a steady and firm step, mounted — gallantly, I may say — and, to the last, exhibited no signs of emotion. The carriages drove off.

In consequence of some little derangements, a full quarter of an hour had passed before the whole of the cavalry was assembled ; I waited patiently at the street-door ; and, without pretending to rival Mr. Ducrow, I may boast that, during the whole of that time, I kept my seat with wonderful tenacity : I sat in a way that might have excited the envy of the statue in *Don Juan*.

At length the signal was given for starting. I advanced with the rest, neither ostentatiously taking the front nor timidly seeking the rear, but falling in just as chance directed — in short, as any experienced rider would have done, who attached no sort of importance to the act of sitting across a horse. Our road lay down St. James's Street (the place of meeting), through the Park, and along the King's Road. Arriving opposite the Palace, my companions turned their horses to the right, while my horse turned me to the left. This occasioned a general cry of “ This is the

way—this is the way ! ” and already I fancied I perceived among them signs of distrust in my equestrian talents. For my own part, I was all confidence ; and, just giving my horse’s head a twitch to the right, I soon remedied my first error, or rather his, and again became one of the party.

We proceeded, at a slow walking pace, from the Palace-gate to the entrance of the Stable-yard ; and though I would not be considered as prone to boasting, I will say that, for the whole of that distance, I did not meet with the slightest hindrance or accident. By-the-by, the police ought to interfere to prevent milk-women with their pails crossing a street when they see a horse advancing. A person of this class came directly under my horse’s nose, and but for S——, who rode up and caught hold of the strap which was fastened about his head,* the careless woman must have been knocked down. She was, however, sufficiently punished by the boys in the street, for I heard them shout after her, “ Well done, stupid ! ” “ That ’s right, Johnny Raw ! ”

On reaching the Stable-yard, my horse, instead of following the others, as I imagined he

* *Bridle* is the proper term.—PRINTER’S DEVIL.

would have done of his own accord, walked slowly towards the mansion of the Marquis of Stafford ; but a tug to the left instantly brought him into the proper direction. I did not regret this accident, for it served to convince me that I possessed a certain degree of power over the animal ; moreover, that I had performed the manœuvre with some dexterity, for I observed that the centinels looked at each other and smiled. Indeed, I may say that the people on both sides of the way stopped to gaze at me as I passed along : a compliment they did not bestow on any other of the party. In St. James's Park — may I mention it without incurring the charge of vanity ? — a cavalry officer actually stopped his horse, and remained for some time looking after me ! At Pimlico Gate there was a general whispering among my friends, and all, except poor R——, (now no more !) galloped off. He and I continued our route for some time, very leisurely ; and, for my part, I was as much at my ease as if seated in an arm-chair. R——, every now and then, cast a glance at me, and seemed anxious to speak, yet hem'd and ha'd, and appeared confused in a way I could not then account for. At length he said—

"P., my good fellow, we have twenty miles to ride to dinner, and we shall never get there at this rate."

"Well," said I, "put spurs to your horse."

"Ay, but—" (*with great hesitation*) — "but you?"

"T is all one to me."

"My dear fellow, I'm—in short I—I'm d—d sorry to see you on horseback."

To this I replied nothing; but, applying a hearty lash to my courser's flanks, he set off at full speed, adopting that peculiar one-two-three pace which, I have since been informed, is denominated a *canter*. Why he chose that in preference to what is called a trot, or a gallop, I have never been able satisfactorily to learn; but I was considerably obliged to him for the selection, for, though the motion was inconceivably rapid, it was, at the same time, pleasant and easy. I take it that flying must be very like it. He seemed scarcely to touch the ground. The hot-houses that decorate the King's Road, the Gardeners' grounds, the "Prospect Places," and "Pleasant Rows," and "Paradise Terraces," were no sooner seen than passed—they appeared and vanished! The rapidity of my progress is not to be de-

scribed : and, had I been allowed to proceed, I am persuaded I should have been at Weybridge —at least, somewhere or other twenty miles off — within the hour.

But soon I heard R—— shouting after me : “ Stop, stop, for the love of Heaven, or you ’ll break your neck ! ”

He overtook me, and entreated me to return, assuring me it was fearful even to behold me. Convinced, as I was, that I should have gone on very well in my own, or rather my horse’s way, he appeared so seriously uneasy on my account, that I consented to return.

“ Shall I lead you — that is, show you the way back to the stable ? ”

I desired only to know where it was, and, thanking him for his super-abundant caution, took the road towards May-fair ; or, rather, the horse took it, for, literally, he walked gently back without any effort of mine to guide him ; standing still, as if by instinct, when he came to the toll-gate at Hyde Park Corner ; then, turning up one street, down another, now right, now left, till he reached his stable. There he stood quietly while I dismounted, and, when I was fairly off his back, he slowly turned his head, and cast a look at

me. It was a look of quiet, good-natured reproach, for having caused him to be dragged from his comfortable warm stable to no purpose. As he walked towards his stall, he looked towards where the grooms were assembled, and, by one glance, acquainted them with the whole of my adventures. Their nods and winks assured me that he did so. I ordered a chaise (a means of locomotion I strongly recommend to all such as are not accustomed to horse exercise) and arrived at Weybridge, in good time for dinner :—a disinclination to much walking, for two or three days afterwards, being the only distinct effect resulting from my little expedition.

My next essay was on Brighton Downs. My late defeat (for in a certain degree it was so) had taught me caution. Instead, therefore, of taking a full-grown horse, I selected a pony for this experiment, determining to choose one an inch higher every day, till I should gradually have acquired the power of managing an animal of the hugest dimensions.

But I fear it is not in my destiny to excel in equestrian exercises : this second attempt was even less successful than the first. In order to give fair play to the principle I intended to

adopt, I chose a pony so small, that when I was across him my feet nearly touched the ground, and it was a moot point whether I was riding, or walking with a pony between my legs. Scarcely had he tasted the sharp fresh air of the Downs when he became frisky : he ran, and I ran ; but, as he was the swifter of the two, he soon (not threw me, but) ran from under me, leaving me for a few seconds standing a-straddle, as if I had been seated on an invisible horse. An attempt to overtake him would have been useless : so I gently walked back to the town, calculating what it was likely I should have to pay for the lost pony. But what was my surprise, when, on arriving at his owner's door, I perceived my frisky and unfaithful bearer standing close at my elbow !

Now, though we sometimes speak of horse-laughs, yet horses do not laugh ; that is to say, they do not express their sense of the ridiculous by that vulgar convulsion peculiar to man : no, they evince it by a subtle and delicate variation of countenance ; and I shall never believe otherwise than that, at the moment I caught my pony's eye, he was enjoying a sly, Shandean, internal chuckle at the awkward situation his flight had left me in, and my evi-

dent confusion at his unexpected return. Since that time, I have never been able to look a horse in the face without blushing, from an inexplicable persuasion that the history of my mis-adventures in their company has got abroad among them, and serves as a standing jest to the whole race.

The reader may now form some idea of the state of my feelings as I approached the court-yard at Vilette. The ladies were specially invited to see me "turn and wind" this untameable courser, *à la mode Anglaise*.

In great extremities slight consolations are eagerly caught at. I had never yet tried to ride *in France*! This was not much, to be sure; yet it was sufficient to inspire me with the assurance that I should come out from the ordeal at something less than the cost of a broken neck. The very appearance of the animal added to my confidence. It was an immense horse, finely proportioned, nearly seven feet tall from the ground to the crown of his head, of a dark snuff-colour, with a long, bushy, waving tail, and a beautiful head of hair floating loosely in the morning breeze.*

* I take the liberty of suggesting that the terms which Mr. P. uses to describe the horse are not those current in the

I had just put one foot in the stirrup, and was preparing to swing myself into the saddle, when the intelligent creature slowly turned its head and darted at me a look — ! There was in it more than whole hours of human language ; it was eloquence refined into an essence which rendered words unnecessary ; its single glance spoke plainly of Weybridge and of Brighton Downs ! It combined all the forms of oratory, but persuasion and entreaty were its great characteristics. There was, besides, an appeal from the animal's consciousness of his own strength to *my* consciousness of my weakness ; and his mute oration concluded with an exhortation that I would spare him the pain of dislodging me from his encumbered loins : an event which, considering my usual and involuntary deference to the will or caprice of my quadrupede companion, it would be beyond all horse-ean power to avoid. To me, experienced in these matters, all this was distinctly uttered.

I found it would be useless to proceed ; so, stable. There it would be said that the horse was bay, brown, or chestnut, of so many hands high, and his beautiful head of hair would be simply termed the mane. " Floating loosely in the morning breeze " is a very pretty phrase, but highly inappropriate to matters of pure jockeyship.—P. D.

submitting to the necessity of the case, I made a start, bent myself double, complained of a violent spasm, and hastily returned to my chamber.

"*C'est pour un autre jour,*" said Monsieur de V——, as he motioned for Hector to be led back to the stable; and the equestrian honour of England survived another day.

An hour or two after the departure of the cavalry, I found myself *sufficiently recovered to quit my room*, and sallied forth to enjoy the country after my own fashion. I sat down first under one clump, then another, strolled about the meadow, the farm-yard (taking a long turn to avoid the stable), loitered by the side of a little winding rivulet, betook myself to its rustic bridge, and indulged freely in the *pontial* luxuries I have before alluded to; next I went to the kitchen ground, watched the operations of the gardener, and from him learnt the names of various flowers; also to distinguish roots and plants while growing, such as potatoes, asparagus, turnips, carrots, and others; which I was astonished to find so different from what they appear to be when served up at table. Several fruit-trees, too, he taught me to tell one from another, almost

as readily by their forms and leaves as by the inspection of the fruit they bear—the latter mode being so easy and obvious as to satisfy none but the veriest Cockney. These are the true uses and pleasures of a visit to the country, at least, they are all I am, or desire to be, acquainted with; and in the enjoyment of them did I pass the hours till dinner time.

At dinner, many were the expressions of regret at the accident which had prevented my showing the party the English mode of taming the spirit of a high-blooded horse; and impatiently did they look forward to the morrow, when the exhibition might take place. So did not I.

In what was called the *cool* of the evening—the thermometer, which for part of the day had been standing at 94, being then about 83—a walk was proposed. I thanked my stars that it was not a ride. After this, the evening was spent in the real French fashion. Everybody, old and young, set to playing at *Colin Maillard* (blind-man's buff); then Madame Saint V— went to the piano-forte, and accompanied her daughter, Mademoiselle Alphon-sine, in some pretty French romances; then everybody jumped up to play at *puss-in-the-*

corner ; then a game at *ecarté* was proposed, and, while some were betting and others playing, a duet on the harp and piano-forte was performed by Mademoiselle Adéle de G—— and her sister Virginie ; then everybody got up and danced (my spasms came on with greater violence than ever) ; then everybody called for sugar and water ; and then everybody retired.

I did not sleep well. I suffered an attack of nightmare. In my dreams I saw Hector —I was on Brighton Downs—at Weybridge. Nags'-heads passed in rapid succession before me—centaurs—grotesque exaggerations of the horse form—even wooden hobby-horses, as if in mockery of me, joined the terrific procession.

As soon as daylight broke, I arose ; and scarcely was I dressed when Monsieur de V—— came into my room : I expected to see Hector walk in after him ; but it happened that Hector was not the subject of his errand. He and the other gentlemen were all going out a-shooting, and were only waiting for me. For me ! Under different circumstances, this would have been a dreadful visitation upon me ; as it was, I considered it as rather a

relief. I had never pulled a trigger in my life, except occasionally that of a pistol or an old musket, for the mere pleasure of firing it off. "What then!" thought I, "it is as easy to shoot at an object as to fire in the air; you have but to point your piece at a certain mark, and pull the trigger, and, that done, the deuce is in it if the shot can't take care of themselves."

A flask of improved double-proof gunpowder and (spite of my most earnest entreaties to the contrary,) a double-barrelled Manton, with all his latest patent improvements, were delivered over to me. Ordinary powder, or an indifferent gun, would have furnished me with somewhat of an excuse in the very possible case of my failure; *now*, no chance was left me of concealing or disguising my want of skill; for, notwithstanding my confidence in the facility of the operation I was about to perform, I still thought that the dexterity acquired by long practice might be of some little advantage.

I requested; I entreated; I could not think of appropriating to myself the best gun in the collection. It was all in vain: I was the only Englishman of the party: the gun had never yet had a fair trial: I was to show what *could*

be done with it; "and," added Monsieur de V——, in a whisper, "I wish to convince some of my incredulous friends here that the stories I have related to them of what I have seen performed by English sportsmen are not altogether apocryphal."

Finding my situation to be without remedy, I loaded my improved, patent, double-barrelled Manton ; and, determined to keep certain odds in my favour, took care to put in plenty of shot. "It will be hard," thought I, "if among so many *one* does not tell."

We sallied forth, and presently turned up a whole drove of partridges.* I hastily presented my piece, and fired in among them at random, pulling both triggers at once. I killed nothing, but, to my great surprise and satisfaction, lamed three poor devils. This piece of cruelty, however, was unintentional, for, so far from aiming at such delicate marks as their legs or wings, I had no intention of striking, *in particular*, any one of their bodies.

The effect of this, my first sporting effort,

* Sportsmen do not talk of turning up droves of partridges: they spring coveys. When P. has occasion to speak of numbers of oxen, he may with safety use the word droves.
—P. D.

seemed to excite some astonishment among my brother sportsmen ; and well it might, for it astonished me. One person asked me whether in England it was usual to fire among the birds, as I had done, scarcely allowing them time to rise ? — and another inquired whether English sportsmen usually fired off both barrels at once ? To this I carelessly replied, that “ Some did, and some did not ; ” and proceeded to reload my patent, improved, double-barrelled Manton.

Scarcely had I done this, when a hare was perceived sitting at a very short distance : as a matter of politeness, it was instantly pointed out to me. I levelled my piece and pulled the triggers ; it missed fire. This was, as they all said, a *malheur* ; for the hare escaped. But even a patent, improved Manton will not go off, unless certain preparations are made to that end — the truth is, I had forgotten to prime it ; add to which another little irregularity, I had thrust my wadding into the barrels before I put in the powder. My sight is weak, and of very limited span : this, as I am informed, is a disadvantage in the field. It is not surprising, therefore, that my third shot was directed against what I mistook for a living

creature of some kind or other, but which turned out to be a hat a labourer had suspended on the branch of a tree. Luckily I did it no injury, and Monsieur de V——, supposing I fired at it merely to create a laugh, and fired wide of it to avoid spoiling the poor man's property, laughed most heartily, at the same time applauding me for my consideration.

I willingly left him in his error, and was proceeding to reload, when a servant came running up to me with a letter. The letter was from Paris, and *très pressée* being written on the outside, the man thought it might be of sufficient importance to warrant this interruption of my sports. It was of no sort of importance whatever, but, keeping that to myself, I made it my excuse to return to the house in order that I might answer it by that day's post. So, delivering my improved patent, double-barrelled Manton into what I knew to be more competent hands, I left the field amidst expressions of the deep regret of my companions, at finding my specimens of English shooting, like my exhibition of English horsemanship, deferred *till to-morrow*. Happy was I when I found myself once more tranquilly

leaning over the railing of my dear little bridge ; and consoling was the reflection that, as yet, the sporting honour of my country had suffered no impeachment at my hands ; since, for any thing my friends knew to the contrary, I might, had I but chosen to do so, have knocked down all the game in the *arrondissement*.

The next day promised to be to me one of pure and unmixed delight. What was my joy when, on waking, I heard the rain pouring down in torrents, with every appearance of its being what is called a thorough set-in-rainy day. "Well," thought I, "I shall see nothing of the cursed horses and guns to-day."

We all met at breakfast, and I, by an unusual flow of spirits, revived those of the rest of the party, rather depressed by what they unjustly stigmatized as the unlucky fall of rain. It deranged all their projects. But their regrets were chiefly on my account : "How disappointing, how vexatious it must be to *Monsieur*, that he can neither ride nor shoot to-day ! "

By repeated assurances that I could for once forego those delights, I succeeded in tranquillizing them. No sooner was breakfast

ended, than Madame St. V—— challenged me to a game at billiards.

“*Ah ça, prenez garde, Madame,*” said Monsieur de V——; “the English are excellent players.”

“My torments,” said I to myself, “are to know no end! Confound billiards! I never played a game in my life. Well—one is not obliged to be an admirable Crichton: up to this time they take me for an able horseman and an expert shot—surely that is enough, and I may venture to confess that I know nothing of billiards.”

I did so: I was praised for my modesty. I protested my ignorance: *Madame* assured me that she was not *de la première force*, and consented to take six points at the onset. I persisted that I knew nothing of the game: *Madame* perceived that my objection to play against her arose from my conscious superiority, and said that, to make it agreeable to me, she would take eight points, nay, ten.

We proceeded to the billiard-room.

“Did I prefer the Russian or the French game?”

Not knowing the one from the other, I left it entirely to the choice of *Madame*, who chose

— I really can't say which. In the course of about ten minutes' play, *Madame* counted seven, and I — as may be supposed — had not made a hit. My *complaisance* was the theme of general approbation. Presently, striking my ball with force, it happened to strike another, and, by its rebound, happened to strike a third, and one of the three happened to roll into a sack at the corner of the table. Here I was overwhelmed with applause, and half-stunned with shouts of “*C'est admirable ! Oh ! que c'est bien joué !*”

My fair adversary remarked, that hitherto I had been *complaisant*, but that now I was growing *méchant*.

My *complaisance*, however, soon returned, and in a few minutes she won the game, without my having again made one ball strike another. Nothing now was heard of but my *complaisance*. *Madame Saint V*— was charmed at my *politesse*: I had allowed her to win the game, playing only one *coup*, just to prove what I was capable of doing; but she begged that, next time, I would not treat her so much like a child, but put forth my strength against her, as she was anxious to improve. The result of this was the proposal of

a match for the next day between me and *Monsieur L*— (a celebrated player,) but with a particular stipulation, that I should give him two points at starting.

The day now went very rainily and pleasantly on, and I was tolerably at my ease, except when, every now and then, I was appealed to to decide some sporting question, or settle some dispute concerning the breed and management of horses. However, I contrived to get through tolerably well *considering*, by saying little and shaking my head significantly—a method I have seen adopted with success in much graver matters.

For three or four days after this, it rained charmingly. Those showers were to me more than figuratively the “ pitying dews of heaven ;” for though each morning I was threatened with the infliction of some new party of pleasure on me, either à *cheval* or à *la chasse*, the state of the weather prevented the execution of the sentence. Night and morning did I consult the barometer—(a Dollond suspended in the *salle à manger*)—which for two whole days pointed stedfastly to “ much rain.” My sleep was tranquil—my spirits were buoyant. On the third day, to my great consternation, the

faithless index wavered towards “changeable.” My visits to the instrument now became more frequent; and had I had “Argosies at sea,” I could not have watched its variations with a more feverish anxiety.

On one of these occasions I was roused from my musings by a tap on the back. It was from the hand of *Monsieur de V*—.

“*Ah! mon cher*,” said he, “I do n’t wonder at your impatience; but fine weather is returning, and then we’ll make up for lost time—*nous nous amuserons bien, allez.*”

The fine weather did, indeed, return! The barometer had now reached “fair,” and was rapidly approaching towards “set fair.” Something was necessary to be done, and that speedily. But what? I could not always affect a sudden attack of spasms, nor dared I repeat my unintended joke of mistaking a hat for a partridge: I could not reasonably hope for the arrival of a letter from Paris always at the critical moment; and, should I continue to treat *Madame Saint V*— like a child, by allowing her to win every game at billiards, my *complaisance* would become an offence.

On the first morning of fair weather, I arose with a heavy heart. All night had I tossed

about in my bed, unable to imagine a decent excuse for withdrawing myself from my sporting friends. To confess my utter incompetency (apparently the most rational way of putting an end to my torments,) I felt to be impossible ; I was ashamed—laugh, reader, if you please—but I was ashamed to do so. Besides, the character of a keen and expert sportsman had been thrust upon me ; and, as matters stood, my most solemn protestations that I was unentitled to any sort of claim to it would have been disbelieved, and, most likely, attributed to an overstrained and affected modesty. Yet something must be done ; and, humiliating as such an avowal would be, should I boldly venture it ? In the event of its being discredited, should I shoot a favourite dog, or maim my friend, or one of my friend's friends, to prove its veracity ? So desperate a case would warrant the application of a violent remedy. I left my room without having brought my mind to a decision, unless the gloomy resolution of running the hazards of the day be worthy the term.

On my way to where the party was assembled I passed the *garde-de-chasse* : he was occupied in cleaning my Manton : I beheld it

with such feelings as I should have entertained had I been condemned to be shot with it. The *garde* bowed to me with marked respect: *Monsieur l'Anglais* had been mentioned to him as a marvellous fine shot; and he accorded me a fitting share of his estimation.

“*Le voila—allons—vite—partons,*” was the cry the instant I was perceived by *Monsieur de V*—. There was no mention of *Hector*; that was something; shooting was to be the amusement of the day. The patent, improved, double-barrelled *Manton* was given to me, and I received it, almost unconscious of what I was about.

We had just reached the *Perron*, (the double flight of steps leading into the court-yard,) when a thought flashed across my mind, as it were by inspiration. I pounced upon it with a sort of desperate avidity, and, as if delay would have diminished its force, I as hastily gave it utterance.

“I am not disposed to shoot to-day; I've just a whim to go a-fishing.”

“*Parbleu!*” said *Monsieur de V*—, “just as you will, my dear; in the country *liberté entière*: I'll give you my own tackle.”

Accordingly he re-entered the house, and

presently returned with two or three rods, and different kinds of lines, hooks, floats, &c.

"There," said he, "you may now angle for what fish you choose, and you'll find abundance of all sorts, great and small, in the canal."

My delight at this relief is not to be described. I knew as little about angling as about shooting, but (thought I) by fishing, or seeming to fish, I am in no danger of compromising my reputation : I have seen many an angler, and expert ones too, sit, from morning till night, bobbing into a pond, and, after all, return with an empty basket—their skill suffering no stain from their want of success. I have merely to say, as I have heard them say, "Curse 'em, they won't bite!"

But my delight was of short duration. Conceive my horror and consternation, when I heard Monsieur de V—— call out to the cook—

"Monsieur Goulard, you need not fricassée the hare to-day : Monsieur P. is going to fish ; so you'll dress a pike or two, à la maître d'hôtel, make a *matelote* of some of his carp, and fry the rest."

Here was dinner for a party made to depend upon the rather uncertain result of my first attempt at angling ! The misfortune was of my own seeking, and there was no escape. Monsieur de V—— recommended me to take Etienne, the gardener's son, with me, to help me in unhooking the large fish, "else," said he, "as they are in such quantities, and bite so fast, you'll very soon be fatigued."

We separated : he and the rest to shoot hares and partridges, I to catch pike and carp.

Now was I once again left without any of those excuses for failure, which, like an indifferent workman, I might have derived from the badness of my tools. Hector was the best horse in France ; my gun was a patent, improved, double-barrelled Manton ; and my fishing-tackle, plague on it ! perfect and complete. To add to my distress, the fish abounded ; they had the reputation of biting well, and be hanged to them !—and the only thing an angler could complain of was, that they bit so fast as to destroy the pleasure of the sport.

On my way to the canal I endeavoured to reason myself into composure. "Surely there can be no great difficulty in what I am now

about to perform : I have but to bait my hook, throw it into the water, and the instant a fish bites at it pull him out."

From a sort of misgiving, however, which my best arguments failed to conquer, I thought it prudent to dismiss Etienne, desiring him to leave the basket (and they had furnished me with one sufficiently capacious to contain Falstaff,) telling him I would call him in the event of my hooking any fish beyond my strength to manage.

Monsieur de V—— had not deceived me. Scarcely had I thrown my bait into the water ere it was caught at ; I drew in my line, and found my hook void. A second, and a third, and a twentieth, and a fiftieth, experiment succeeded in precisely the same manner. I no sooner renewed my bait than it was purloined with perfect impunity. Had the cursed fry passed by it without deigning to notice it, I might have consoled myself with examples of similar occurrences ; but to catch it, and give me fair notice of their intention to abscond with it by a gentle tug at my line, was provoking beyond bearing ; it would have exhausted the patience of Izaak Walton himself.

Notwithstanding my regard for Monsieur de

V——, I began to tire of feeding his fishes ; and suspected that I must be cutting a ridiculous figure in the eyes of the finny tribe ; in short, that they were making what is vulgarly termed a dead set against me. I varied my manner ; I increased, I diminished, the quantity of my bait ; I tried different sorts ; now and then I tempted them with the bare hook, but all was to no purpose.

After four hours of unrewarded efforts (in the course of which time I was once on the point of calling Etienne to assist me in pulling in what proved to be a tuft of weeds), I had the mortification to find dangling at the end of my line a wretched, miserable, little gudgeon, two inches long, which had caught itself—I have not the vanity to suppose I caught it—upon my hook. Though in itself worse than nothing, I received it as a promise of better fortune, and threw the tiny fish into my huge basket, whence, to say the truth, it looked an epigram at me.

But this was the beginning and the ending of my prosperity. At the expiration of another four hours I was joined by Monsieur de V——. On looking into the basket, he said that I had done right in sending *the others* up to the

house. I assured him that THE FISH he detected at the bottom was the only one I had caught. He burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, saying, he saw through the jest at once; that I was a *farceur*, and had thrown all the large fish back again into the canal as fast as I had drawn them out, for the sake of the caricature of so small a fish in so large a basket. I insisted that that one fish was the sole result of my day's labour. No, no. The English were expert anglers: the canal was abundantly stocked, I had exhausted all my bait, and he was certain of the trick.

Goulard was ordered to cook the hare. The *plaisanterie* of my one little gudgeon in the huge basket was frequently repeated in the course of dinner, and applauded as a most humorous jest. One of the party, however, observed, that though he admired the joke, he thought a *matelotte de carpe* would have been a better; and proposed that, as I had deprived them of a service of fish, I should be punished by the deduction of half an hour from my next day's *ride*, which time I should occupy in providing fish for the dinner.

Already was I suffering by anticipation the

morrow's torments, when a servant entered with a bundle of newspapers and letters just arrived from Paris. Among them was a letter for me. I read it, and, affecting considerable surprise and concern, declared that I must leave Vilette early the next morning on business which would admit of no delay. Entreaties that I would stay but to enjoy one day's shooting —one day's trial of Hector — were unavailing — I was resolved. But it was not without great difficulty that I succeeded in resisting Monsieur de V——'s pressing offer to lend me Hector, to carry me back to Paris, which mode of conveyance, he assured me, would save me much time, though I should even sleep one night on the road, as Hector would fly with me like an eagle.

The next morning I took my departure, after having passed a week in unspeakable torments, where I had expected to spend a month in tranquillity and repose: and, by one of those whimsical chains of circumstances, to which many persons, with a certain prejudice in their favour, have been indebted for the reputation of possessing great talents, without ever having given any distinct manifestation of them, I left behind me the re-

putation of being the most expert horseman, the surest shot, the best and politest billiard-player, and the most dextrous angler, that had ever visited Vilette.

EXTRACT FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR FOLLOWING PAPERS WHEN THEY FIRST APPEARED.

• * * * * I took up "*L'Annuaire Dramatique*," for the purpose of recalling to my recollection certain French actors whom I had known in private life; and of whom I fancied that, without infringing the respect due to private intercourse, I could relate some amusing anecdotes. To describe an actor in his professional character —(I mean, *so as to convey a distinct and intelligible notion of him*)— was as far from my thoughts as to describe a cloud, or a wave, or a breeze. The thing has never been done successfully but once, and that was by Colley Cibber; and if, in two or three instances, I have, unwarily, been led into the attempt • * * * *

RECOLLECTIONS
OR
CERTAIN FRENCH ACTORS.

No. I.

MADAME GAVAUDAN.—MADEMOISELLE
BIGOTTINI.—FANNI BIAS.

“The players are come hither, my Lord.”—SHAKSPEARE.

“Come like shadows, so depart.”—IBID.

THE death of a great poet or a great painter, who has attained the plentitude of his power, and achieved his fame, is perhaps no very serious loss to the community. At the period of its occurrence it is acutely felt, because the EXTINCTION OF GENIUS is the most pithy sermon that can be read to us upon the most serious of subjects ; and it is deeply deplored, because, had he who is taken from us existed longer, he might have bequeathed to us a richer legacy.

But, like all calamities which are accompanied with urgent motives of consolation, it is soon forgotten. The painter survives in the beautiful creations of his pencil : the sublime musings or the witty conceptions of the poet are, to the world at large, the poet himself : and, except by those who in losing him are deprived of an agreeable acquaintance or a valued friend, the individual is not long remembered even in his own generation ; whilst, to the next, it becomes a matter of indifference, save only as a dry question of chronology, whether a Byron or a Lawrence adorned the nineteenth century or the fifteenth. Our enjoyment of "Hamlet," "Childe Harold," "Don Juan," or "The School for Scandal," —of the works of Titian or Vandyck, of Reynolds or of Lawrence— is little, if at all, diminished by the consideration that their glorious authors are no longer amongst us ; the sum of human happiness dependant upon the pleasurable sensations derivable from works of literature or art is not sensibly affected by that circumstance : the removal of the poet or the painter is, therefore, no very serious loss to the community.

But the player, though standing lower in

the scale of intellectual rank than either of these—though his fame be less extended and less durable than their's—occasions a profounder and more lasting feeling of regret by his removal from his little sphere of action. It is true that this affects only his contemporaries; but it exists as long as they exist, and to them his loss is irreparable. He himself—our long-cherished favourite, must, in his own proper person, appear before us; when he is gone, all is gone: he can leave us nothing which may atone for his absence: we acknowledge no substitute; and the very attempt to supply the place he has vacated is in most cases an aggravation of the loss.

It seems to be the peculiar privilege of the actor* to maintain unalienable possession of our first impressions. It is not so with public performers in other departments. The reigning favourite of to-day may sing an air, perform a concerto, or execute a *pas seul*, with greater or with less effect than the reigning favourite of twenty years ago; and we can decide fairly upon their relative merits, for our judgment

* By this is meant the *great* actor, the *finished artist*, only—not the illiterate rantor or the vulgar buffoon, who, by his ignorance or abuse of the principles of his profession, degrades a fine art to the level of a sordid trade.

encounters no obstinate first impressions to grapple with — none, at most, which a very slight regard to justice will not overcome. With good cause on our side, we may possibly prefer the next new Mandane to Mrs. Billington, and the next-imported opera-dancer to Angiolini or Parisot ; but whom do we, or ever can we, prefer to John Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Jordan, Miss O'Neill, Munden ! These names are intimately associated in our recollections with all that is grand, and dignified, and impassioned, and pathetic—with all that is joyous, or humorous, or grotesque, in the art of acting. From them it was we derived our first notions of a vast variety of dramatic characters, which, with all the weight and force of their genius, they stamped on our minds ; and, as the impress they bestowed was the impress of truth, like truth it is immovable — immutable. We know *one* Coriolanus, *one* Zanga, and can never be forced to acknowledge any other ; we have identified certain qualities of mind, certain peculiarities of person, tone, and feature, with Constance and Lady Macbeth, with Peggy and Miss Prue, with Belvidera and Mrs. Haller, with Old Dornton, and Menenius, and Nipperkin ; and our senses

are no more capable of disengaging themselves from the impressions thus received than of rejecting an obvious truth in favour of an obvious falsehood. But it is genius of the highest order only, genius like their's, that can thus enthrall us.

In making these remarks we are not forgetful of the many eminent actors we still possess ; nor must they take offence at the sighs we breathe when we consider the loss we have sustained by the death or retirement of their great predecessors. There are amongst them some who will occasion similar regrets—though far hence be that time !—and others, a sort of posterity to themselves, who, having relinquished to the young aspirant their more juvenile parts, may even now enjoy the satisfaction of overhearing our lamentations at the change. Mrs. Gibbs, the liveliest and sauciest of Abigails, who, at *something beyond five-and-twenty*, displays the buoyant hilarity of fifteen, can witness our vain repinings at the loss of Mary Thornberry ; and the excellent actor who has risen to the afflicting dignity of personating all the more-than-usually broken-hearted fathers may sometimes be gratified at hearing us lament that, for us, Bob Handy,

Ollapod, and Pangloss, are no more.* No amends can be made us for the loss of our favourite actor: it occasions a void in our pleasures never to be supplied. It is easy to put a substitute into his place; but, to us, a substitute is no more a compensation than would be the present of a baby from the Foundling Hospital to a father who had lost a favourite child. The object intended is never attained; and we quit the theatre with mingled feelings of disappointment, dissatisfaction, and sorrow. It may fairly be asserted, then, that the loss of a fine actor is a greater calamity to his contemporaries than that of either the poet or the painter.

I have been led into these reflections by taking up a small volume, entitled *L'Annuaire Dramatique* for 1818. It is a list (published annually) of the performers, &c. belonging to all the theatres of Paris. What a host of talent has the mimic world been deprived of, either by death or the warnings of time, in the few years only which have elapsed since then! Not to mention many names, which, eminent

* This and the three following papers were written in 1830, since when Mr. Fawcett (the actor here alluded to) has retired from the stage.

as they are, may not be familiar to the twenty or thirty persons in all England who have never paid a visit to Paris ; and confining my notice to such only as are well-known to us all—there was Fleury, who, in high comedy, for point, piquancy, and finish, has never, perhaps, been excelled ; — Talma ; — Martin, a singer, of whom a French critic truly said, that he had only to open his mouth and the airs seemed to flow out of it ready made ; and Madame Gavaudan.

Madame Gavaudan, as an actress, was humorous, pathetic, arch, *naïve*, playful. Her *forte* lay in the representation of young boys and country girls. Her person was small, and her manner and deportment were perfectly graceful. Her performances, though deeply studied, and finished with as much care as a miniature painting, never betrayed the slightest mark of labour or of art ; on the contrary, they were natural in the extreme—that is to say, they approached as near to Nature as good taste in any department of fine art will allow. As a singer, her voice was not remarkable for extent, either in volume or compass ; but it was sweet, and her intonation was correct—a quality for which few French singers deserve

praise. She knew the exact limits of her powers, and never attempted to exceed them. Her object was to sing to the heart rather than to the ear, and seldom did she miss her aim. She was, withal, an excellent musician : and, although such an opinion might startle a French critic—an admirer of the deep roarings of Lais or the screams of Madame Branchu—I hesitate not to declare that at that time Madame Gavaudan was the most delightful singer in France. To enumerate the parts in which she excelled, both as actress and singer, would be needless ; but those who have seen her in *Margot* (Nell, in the Devil to Pay) will remember that in that character she displayed, in combination, all the qualities she possessed. The most striking trait in this performance was, that Margot was rustic merely—not vulgar :—she was the wife of the cobbler of a little village ; not of a cobbler living in a cellar, or a back-garret in a town. This rare union of the excellent comic actress with the excellent singer was without a parallel then, and there is no equivalent for it now.

Then, in another department, there was Gardel, ballet-master at the great Opera—unparalleled for his Heroic and Mythological Bal-

lets. And Mademoiselle Clotilde, who, for dignity and grandeur, was the very Juno of the Theatre. And Fanni Bias, Terpsichore herself. And Mademoiselle Bigottini, whose eloquent Pantomime was an universal language which would have been understood by any nation on earth ; and who, when she danced, deceived you into a belief that dancing was an intellectual art.

At about the period in question (1818), my poor friend J——, who shortly afterwards died on his way to Florence, was preparing, for publication, two small volumes of verses, which he called "Rambles in Rhyme." These were descriptions of the most remarkable objects in the French capital, and were gay or serious as the subject might be. The appearance, however, of Moore's witty "Fudge Family" induced him to suppress his work ; but, as the following passages, though not the best in the collection, relate immediately to the two last-named *artistes*, I shall take the liberty to extract them from the original papers which he left in my possession. The first was almost extemporized at the Opera-House in the course of the performance of that realization of a poetic vision, Didelot's ballet of

Flore et Zephyre, in which Fanni Bias was the Flora.

" Gently, gently let me tread,
 For I stray on fairy ground,
 Thither by wanton Fancy led !
 See those forms that glide around,
 Where the glistening fountain plays :
 Now they meet in busy maze ;
 Singly now they trip along ;
 Now in playful groups combining,
 Wreaths of luxuriant roses twining,
 Towards yon bloomy bower they throng.
 And SHE, the fairest of the train,
 Lightly skipping o'er the plain !
 Scarce beneath her airy tread
 The daisy bows its tender head,
 Or, bending, it upsprings again,
 As if a breeze had swept the plain.
 Is it a being of the earth ?
 Or vision of poetic birth,
 Offspring of musings sweet and wild,
 Imagination's airy child,
 Such as the soul of Maro saw,
 Orgay Anacreon loved to draw ?
 'Tis Flora, sure ! I know her now
 By the chaplet on her brow,
 And Zephyr lightly hovering o'er her,
 And the flowers that spring before her,
 And those, her nymphs, who, hand in hand,
 Near yon silvery current stand.
 Now she mingles with the throng—
 Mingled, but not conceal'd among ;
 For brighter charms, superior grace,
 Denote the goddess of the place."

The next is a fragment of a tribute to the genius of Mademoiselle Bigottini.

* * * * *

" Hark ! and whence that mournful strain !
It ceases!—now it breathes again !
And who the maid with varying step advancing,
Or wildly hurried, or as wildly slow ;
Pallid her cheek, her eye alternate glancing
The flash of madness—the pale beam of woe ?
'T is Nina, poor distracted maid !
Thus forlorn and sad she roves
Through the close and tangled groves,
Seeking her lost lover's shade !
Still she speaks not, still mine ear
Bends to catch some plaintive sound.
No word ! yet see ! the struggling tear
Bursts from every eye around !
Words !—mark her action ! mark her speaking eye !—
The voiceless eloquence her looks impart !
These speak, in accents that vain words defy,
An universal language to the heart—
Thy language, Nature ! Ye who *see* it, say !
Your tears and silence own its unresisted sway !

Child of the Graces ! Bigottini, these,
These are the Triumphs of thy matchless art :
At once to melt and captivate the heart—
To awe the subject senses, and to please ;
To bid the airy offspring of the Muse,
That only in the Poet's mind have been,
Start into life, and breathe upon the scene,
Deck'd in Imagination's loveliest hues ;—
To illustrate the Muses, and inspire !
For many a grace to thee the marble owes—
For thee the Poet sings—the canvass glows !—
These are thy triumphs !"

* * * * *

But Bigottini has quitted the theatre, and
poor Fanni Bias the world !

RECOLLECTIONS
OF
CERTAIN FRENCH ACTORS.

No. II.

T A L M A.

“The poor player,
That frets and struts his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more!”

SHAKSPERE.

AND Talma too is gone!

I first became acquainted with that great actor on his visit to this country in 1817. He was then, assisted by Mademoiselle Georges, giving a series of performances at the Opera Concert-rooms. These consisted of selections of the most striking scenes from his most popular characters. Upon my telling him, in answer to his inquiry whether I had attended any of them, that I had not, he said: “Shall you be soon in France?”—“Yes, I think I shall.”—“Then do not see me here; wait till

you shall come there. I am not in my proper frame here. I wish you should see me on my own theatre. Your English audience and me—we don't understand one another: the *conventions* of our stage are so different from your's, I don't know what they expect of me, and they don't understand what I do; therefore there is no enthusiasm, and that *must be* for the actor. If he inspires his audience, he catches back the enthusiasm from them: if they are cold, he will be cold. Then I will tell you: many of them don't understand what I *say*, but come to me for the sake of *dandy*."

— He laughed as he said this, and appeared not a little pleased at the opportunity of using a word then much in vogue, but which he misapplied for *fashion*.

" Besides," he continued, " I give them only my best scenes, and that is disadvantageous to me."

As I did not instantly perceive how showing himself at his best could be to his disadvantage, he explained:—

" Why, you see there is no contrast; there is no light and shade; no repose. My scenes of passion, for example—they have no pre-

paration for them, so they are abrupt and shocking.”*

“G——,” said I, “with whom you are well acquainted, made a similar remark, the other evening, upon what I had called the unreadable parts of the *Paradise Lost*. ‘They would certainly be unreadable,’ said he, ‘any where but where they are ; but there they serve as resting-places for the mind, which is often carried to the highest degree of excitement ; and were it not for those unreadable parts, that glorious poem would, perhaps, be unreadable altogether.’”

“Ha ! he said so ? You see I am right, then. It is the same thing in art and in literature — there must be light and shade.”

Soon after this I had the gratification of seeing him on his own stage.† The play was Hamlet. I had previously read the French

* He used this word in its French sense :—simply as occasioning a shock—an untimely surprise. Talma, as is well known, spoke English with great fluency and with considerable correctness ; with but a slight French accent, yet a strong French intonation. It was by this latter circumstance, together with his occasionally falling into minute French idioms, you detected that English was not his habitual language. Upon this occasion our conversation was in English ; and I have endeavoured—and I think I may trust to the accuracy of my memory in this respect—to repeat his share in it in his own words.

† September 13th, 1817.

tragedy, so that I was prepared for its extraordinary variations from, and its still more extraordinary inferiority to, our own. For regularity, and for compactness of construction, the play of Ducas deserves some praise ; but in all other respects the French poet has altered, without ever once improving upon, his great original. To say nothing of the gentle Ophelia, who is here converted into something little better than a jealous termagant ; and of other personages, who, although they retain their respective stations in the drama, have undergone similar changes of character, Hamlet himself is shorn of all his finer qualities. He is not there the tender, the melancholy, the reflective, the philosophic, the paramountly humane !

Yet, though deficient in all that constitutes the charm and essence of the character, the Hamlet of the French stage was better fitted than the marvellous creation of Shakspeare to display the genius of Talma. His province was the profound, the terrible, the sublime ; but he was not remarkable for tenderness ; and gaiety and playfulness (qualities of our Hamlet,) were utterly beyond his reach. The play, therefore, was well constructed for

exhibiting what he could do, and for concealing what he could not ; and, had he selected any for the purpose of producing a powerful first impression, this would have been the one.

His first entrance—his rush upon the stage, imagining he is followed by his father's ghost — was really terrific ! The wild cry, the staggering and uncertain step, the eyes distended, the open mouth, the wide-spread fingers, and hands vaguely waving in the air — it was altogether a representation of terror, mingled with horror, unequalled for force and truth. It needed the presence of no ghost to account for it ; it was manifest that nothing short of a supernatural vision could have occasioned it. He almost realized the effects enumerated by Shakspeare's ghost as consequent upon his narrating the tale he *could* unfold to “ears of flesh and blood.”

Little, if at all, inferior to this was his gradual recovery from his alarm on discovering himself to be in the presence of Norceste.

In this play the ghost does not appear, but, whenever he is *supposed* to appear, you saw him in the actor's face. For stage purposes this arrangement is certainly preferable to our own. In the reading of Hamlet the imagination

receives no shock from the stage-direction — *Enter Ghost* : — on the contrary, it is excited by it, and creates for itself a dim, vague shadow, from which the appalling words of the spectre seem to proceed. It is not so on the stage. An actor — like Talma — may terrify you by the display of his own terrors ; but the illusion is diminished, if not entirely destroyed, by the actual presence of some lusty gentleman, (and such, by some odd fatality, is usually selected as the representative of “the buried majesty of Denmark,”) who struts about in a pair of creaking boots, with a rolling-pin in his hand. Considering the vast improvements which have been made in scenic effects, it is not too much to desire that this evil should be remedied. That, by the exercise of a very small portion of ingenuity, it could be, can hardly be doubted ; and it is a pity, when the talents of scene-painters and machinists are taxed to the uttermost in the getting up of some worthless melodrama, or Easter pageant, that more is not done towards the illustration of Hamlet, Macbeth, the Midsummer-Night’s Dream, the Tempest, and other such plays, wherein supernatural or preternatural appearances occur.

In the case of Hamlet, I question the *necess-*

sity of the Ghost being made to appear at all. Certainly, he must be *heard*; and this might, without great difficulty, be contrived. In the closet scene, for instance, no greater violence would be done to the imagination of the spectator in being made to suppose that Hamlet *sees* the Ghost, although it were invisible to the audience, than (as at present) that the Queen *does not* when it actually appears on the stage. The palpable, matter-of-fact Ghost is the great blemish of our play, *as acted*; for his * appearance is subversive of theatrical illusion, and usually excites sensations more nearly allied to the ludicrous than the sublime. The effect produced by Talma's "*Je le vois*"—when he sees a something invisible to all but himself—was awful; but that effect would have been considerably weakened, if not abso-

* I say *his*, for I think of the *Stage-Ghost*, and cannot, for the soul of me, commit the absurdity of bestowing upon him the ethereal *it*. The impression commonly produced by the part was lately exemplified with most amusing *naïveté*, in a compliment paid by a newspaper-critic to a clever actor, who had *condescended* to perform it: "And the ghost, in the hands of Mr. ——, was more than usually gentlemanlike and respectable." Gentlemanlike and respectable! Why, if it had occurred to any wag to lampoon the Cock-lane Ghost by describing it as being gentlemanlike and respectable, that imposture could not have been carried on for eight-and-forty hours.

lutely converted into the ridiculous, had his alarm been excited by the *bond-fide* apparition of a hog in armour. So great is the drawback upon the efforts of even the best English actor in all his scenes with what, as he is represented, may be called the Un-phantom, that it is at least worth an attempt to contrive some expedient by which his appearance might be *subdued*, if not altogether dispensed with.

But to return to Talma. On a line with his awful imaginings of the presence of the Ghost, might be placed his threats to Claudius. They were overwhelming—like thunder—or a whirlwind; and the actor (Desmousseaux), to whom they were addressed, forgetting, in their fearful reality, the play, the stage, the audience, seemed absolutely to quail beneath them. I have seen him produce a similar effect in *Nero*.

I once heard him in a moment of anger and indignation—I mean in real life—utter three words, which, if so given on the stage, would have electrified the audience; for, as it was, they shook the nerves of a *gens-d'arme*. I was going with him to the *Théâtre Français* to see him act *Falkland* (Sir Edward Mortimer.) The shortest cut into the theatre was

by the public entrance ; so he made his way through the crowd (I following him) till he reached the door. As the doors were not yet open to the public, the sentinel on duty, not knowing the tragedian, advanced with the usual word of order, “*Ne passe pas !*” at the same time barring the way with his carbine. Talma, indignant at the interruption, fell back one step, drew himself up to his extremest height, struck his breast six or seven times in rapid succession, and, his eyes flashing fire, he thundered out—“*Je suis Talma !*”—with a long-continued emphasis on the last syllable. The sentinel literally let his piece fall from his hands, and drew back to the very wall, whilst we passed on.

For scenes of the kind I have described he possessed many and peculiar advantages.

Though not tall, he appeared to be what is termed well-knit—firm and muscular; his head was large and broad, and set solidly upon a neck unusually thick; his eye was quick, piercing, flashing, even fierce; and his face altogether capable of expressing, in the highest degree, every variety of tragic passion, but more particularly rage and terror. Then his voice was deep, full, clear, round, and musical.

It was this command of voice that enabled him to give such touching effect to his lamentation over the urn containing the ashes of his father —(in Hamlet)—a scene of the most profound pathetic. But he never suffered himself to be betrayed, by the acknowledged beauty of his voice, into mere unmeaning sing-song. His tones were beautiful chiefly because they were fraught with sense and passion. Like Young's and like John Kemble's—(whose voice was in many respects defective) —they were *intellectual*; and, like their's, too, when they were most beautiful, they were most truly the reflex of his feelings and his understanding. He never had recourse to them as a cover to a feeble conception; nor did he take refuge in empty sound from inability to grapple with sense. These qualifications combined it was that rendered him super-eminent in such scenes as those I have noticed.

One other point. I do not recollect ever to have heard a soliloquy (*as a soliloquy*) so well delivered as by him; I allude particularly to the paraphrase on “To be or not to be!” He seemed to be totally unconscious of the presence of an audience. His air was that of fixed and intense thoughtfulness: his eyes were

thinking, and his words appeared to drop involuntarily from his lips. It was thinking aloud—no more. It has been said that, to deliver a soliloquy naturally is one of the most difficult points in the art of acting: certainly it was conquered by Talma.

Yet, notwithstanding the general excellency of this performance, there were parts which forced upon you the recollection of his own expression: “There must be light and shade;” and, to confess the truth, the “shade” was deep and frequent. He was a tedious declaimer; and there did occur speeches of a hundred or a hundred and fifty lines in length, which he delivered in one unvarying tone—and these were intolerably fatiguing. Some part of this fault might be charged upon the vicious construction of French tragedy, which delights in long declamatory *tirades*, and part upon the eternal jingle of the rhyme; yet a considerable portion of it must certainly remain with the actor, who, although in a greater degree than any other French performer he possessed the art of disguising the monotony of the rhyme, he was cold (I had almost said tame) unless when excited by a deep feeling or a powerful passion.

Then, to an eye long and till lately accustomed to the noble presence of John Kemble —to his action and attitudes, picturesque, dignified, grand, sublime, as they were—Talma appeared inelegant, ungraceful, and sometimes uncouth. But the gestures of the French, as of the more southern nations, even as accompaniments to conversation, are rapid and violent; and much of that which had at first appeared to me unnatural and ungraceful, partly perhaps because it was un-English, I grew reconciled to, in proportion as I became acquainted with its propriety and truth. Still, compared with his general excellence, these were but trifling blemishes; for, in all the essentials of tragic acting, Talma was—in a word, TALMA.

I have unwarily been led into some notice of Talma in his professional character, although, for the reasons stated in a former paper,* I intended to abstain from so doing. My object was to relate a few *traits* of him in private life, and to this I proceed.

Talma was amiable, cheerful, and unassuming. His manners were singularly un-

* See the introductory note to this series of papers, page 178.

affected and simple : had you seen him for the first time, in private, you would not have recognized in him the great tragedian. At home you saw him in his dressing-gown and slippers —he left the buskin and toga at the theatre.

But, though cheerful, and sometimes even playful*, he did not premeditately *set about* being playful for the purpose of astonishing you, by letting you see how wonderfully a great tragic actor could *unbend*! He was never gay but from sheer *gaîté de cœur*, and then the merest trifle would serve to amuse him.

For instance : at dinner, one day, instead of asking for the *salière*, (the salt-cellar, as I intended,) I asked for the *sellier*. Talma burst out laughing, and said, “ Oh ! I knew that in England you eat the saddle of mutton, but I did not know that you eat the saddler.” This served him as a joke for the rest of the evening, and to every body that came he introduced me as the Englishman who had come to France to eat up the saddlers — “ *Exprès, Messieurs, pour manger les selliers.*”

As instances of the almost childish simplicity of his manners.—I made him a present

* When I said that he was deficient in playfulness and gaiety, I meant *on the stage only*.

of Ayscough's Index to Shakspeare. The French had no work of a similar kind. For several days after the acquisition, this book was his plaything ; he was as pleased with it as a child would be with a new toy, and it was scarcely ever out of his hand. To every one who happened to pay him a visit he exhibited his treasure ; at the same time explaining to them its uses, and requesting of them to suggest to him some word, of which he would boldly undertake to give them an example from Shakspeare. If he succeeded, he would triumphantly exclaim—" Ha !—you see !—eh ? —Why have we not an Ayscough for Corneille ? I *will* have an Ayscough for Corneille." If he failed, he would pettishly throw the blame of the failure upon his friend, with, " But, my friend, what can you expect if you *will* propose to one an insignificant word ? " In the absence of visitors he would, for the hundredth time in the day, apply to his lady, who was not quite as affluent in the quality of patience as Griselda : " *Allons, Caroline ; encore un mot—pour la dernière fois ;*" to which the reply would be, " *Va ; enfin tu m'ennuies avec ton Schakispere.*" Reduced to his own resources, he would then pick words at ran-

dom from a dictionary, and afterwards seek them in his dear Ayscough.

This Ayscough-mania lasted about a week. It was superseded by one of a more expensive character: the exhibition of an undoubted original portrait of Shakspeare (known as the Bellows-Shakspeare, from its being painted on one of the panels of an old pair of bellows) which he purchased, a dead bargain, for some thousands of francs, its real value being—nothing.

One day he was introduced to the Chevalier Aude, who had lately returned to Paris after a very long absence. The Chevalier was then a thin, tottering, grey-headed old gentleman of sixty. Talma appeared to be struck with the name.

“Pray, *Monsieur le Chevalier*,” said he, “how is your son?”

“I have no son, sir,” was the answer.

“Ah! how long has he been dead?”

“I never had a son,” replied the Chevalier.

“That’s very odd!” continued Talma: “Surely I am not mistaken in the name? I perfectly well recollect acting (about thirty years ago, at my outset in my career) in a piece which was written by a Chevalier Aude—a

fine, tall, handsome young fellow of about thirty :—and you are not his father !”

“ Ah ! my dear Monsieur Talma,” said the Chevalier, with a sigh ; “ *I* am that *identical* fine, tall, handsome, young fellow—of thirty years ago.”

“ *Pardi !* ” exclaimed the tragedian ; “ those villainous thirty years that have intervened ! I never thought of taking them into the account.”

Though not a vain man, he entertained a fair notion of his own value. He was not displeased with well-merited praise ; but more than he loved that he despised flattery. He instantly distinguished one from the other. He had been acting *Œdipe*—a character in which he was impressive, grand, and terrible throughout. At the conclusion of the performance, several persons visited him in his dressing-room. In reply to some fair compliment paid to him, he quietly said, “ *Oui, je suis content de moi.* ” A person present, after indulging in much wild panegyric, concluded with a phrase of French magniloquence—“ After this you have but one triumph more to achieve to render you immortal — play comedy.” Talma somewhat angrily exclaimed, “ *Ah ! — Bah !* ” And,

turning to me, he said in English—" Some of these people make me sick—they would flatter me to death."

None but a man of true genius would have *dared* to mention himself in the manner he once did. A merely vain man, or a pretender, would have *insinuated* as much, but in a round-about, shuffling way. Speaking of the relative difficulties of tragic and of comic acting, he gave it as his opinion that tragedy required deeper study, as well as more extensive qualifications in the actor. " As a proof of it," he added, " see how many fine comic actors we can name, whilst we can only cite four great tragedians," (and he counted on his fingers :) " *Il n'y a que Le Kain—La Rive—St. Prix—et moi.*"

He bore criticism with extreme complacency, provided it appeared to be dictated by good sense and justice ; and I have seen him more ruffled at being told that he had made a mistake at a game of dominoes (a favourite recreation of his), or that he had missed a *coup* at billiards (although from the shortness of his sight he could hardly see his ball at three feet distance from him), than by a severe examination of one of his most important performances.

But the attacks of ignorance and pretension would sometimes annoy him beyond his power of concealing his vexation.

His performance of Sylla, in M. Jouy's tragedy of that name, drew forth a profusion of critiques. The royalist papers were mostly hostile to him, and, for one reason amongst others, because it was thought that, in dressing his head for the character, he had endeavoured to improve the resemblance he was said to bear to Napoleon; when the fact was, he had adopted for his authority the well-known bust of Sylla himself. The resemblance, therefore, though certainly it was striking, was purely accidental.

After reading one of those papers—a tissue of ignorance and vulgar malevolence—he crumpled it up in his hand, and, dashing it violently on the ground, gave vent to his anger in terms of unusual severity. Madame—— expressed her astonishment at his being so irritated by the scribble of what she designated *un ignorant renforcé*.

“*Justement c'est pour cela!*” exclaimed Talma; “*que l'on soit éclaboussé par un cheval, à la bonne heure; mais par un âne——!*”—“To be bespattered with mud by a horse, so be it; but by an *ass*——! Did n't

old Geoffroy* attack me, all through his life, three-hundred-and-sixty-five times in every year ? and was I angry with him ? But he was something, at least.” A French idiom—“*mais lui !—c'étoit quelque chose, au moins.*”

After I had seen him play Hamlet, he was desirous that I should tell him what I thought of him in comparison with John Kemble in the same character. The styles of these two great actors were as different from each other as the characters of the two Hamlets : so it was scarcely possible to draw a comparison between them. Perhaps the question could never strictly have been, which *actor* do you prefer ? but, rather, which *style of acting* ? This I told him ; and added that, if they could change places, I thought they would both be, in some respects, gainers :—that the quiet dignity of the French tragedy would be favourable to the display of some of the qualities of Kemble, while the tur-

* Many years editor of the *Journal des Débats*. He was a man of deep and extensive learning, and a profound critic; but, being as firmly attached to the old school of acting as of literature, he was not generally favourable to Talma, whom he considered somewhat in the light of an innovator—as happily he was. Besides reforming, in a considerable degree, the French system of declamation, Talma operated the same reform in the costume of the French as did John Kemble in that of the English stage.

bulent passions of our's would afford greater opportunities to him (Talma).

“ Ah !” said he, with something between a groan and a sigh, “ that is what I want—the stiff rules and the coldness of the French drama cramp me—I have not room to throw myself out in—it is an ungrateful theatre [for drama] to me—I do all I can for it ; it does little for me.—Yes, I ought to have been an English actor ; I want the liberty of your English stage, and to *lutter*—*lutter*—how do you say it ?——” (Impatiently.)

“ To wrestle.”

“ Yes, to wrestle—I want to wrestle with Shakspeare.”

In the course of the same conversation he took credit for the superior decency of their stage, and said that a French audience would not tolerate the introduction of Ophelia’s coffin.

“ Yet,” said I, “ you bring on the urn supposed to contain the ashes of your father. I admit that an urn is a more picturesque object than——”

“ No, that is not the reason : the coffin is supposed to contain a dead body, which is shocking.”

“ So is your urn : the only real difference is

that the body is burnt—roasted—; but you French people cook every thing."

He considered for a few moments; then laughed, and said, " You were right at first; the urn is a more picturesque object."

He was singularly free and unaffected in giving his opinion, when asked for, of other actors. If that opinion happened to be adverse to the party in question, he would deliver it frankly. He never on such occasions assumed a tone of mock-liberality, " damning with faint praise." As his transcendent talents placed him above the suspicion of envy or jealousy, he could afford to speak out, and he did so. On the other hand, he was the first and the most ardent to encourage a promising genius.

Being one night at the *Gaité* (one of the minor theatres) he saw an actor of the name of Lafargue in some part in which he displayed considerable ability. Unwilling to trust to a first impression, he went again to see him in some other performance ; and, being confirmed in the favourable opinion he had formed of him, he instantly procured his removal to a prominent station at the second French theatre, then a sort of stepping-stone to the first. Many traits of this nature might be related of him.

Apropos of the minor theatres : there was at the *Ambigu* a man of the name of (I think) Frénoy, a melo-drame-actor, so confirmed an imitator of Talma that he had acquired the title of “the Talma of the Boulevard.” This man’s imitation of his great prototype was, in sober seriousness, what little Simmons’s imitation of Kemble in *Coriolanus* was, in jest : that is to say, it was irresistibly droll. It is certain he considered himself as equal to Talma, if not, in some respects, superior ; for at the *Théâtre Français* he has been heard to express his approbation of him in such terms as—“Good —good—*very good!*” or, “There ; *that* is as I wish him to be ; he has pleased *me* to-night.” Speaking of him, Talma said, “If it were not for Potier, I should say that that man amuses me more than any actor in Paris. He is a little *me* : (*C'est un petit moi,*) when I see him, it is like looking at myself in a crooked mirror—I see all my features, but I see them distorted. But the devil take him ! he puzzles me ; for he makes me think that, unless I am a very fine actor, I must be altogether detestable.”

He was a great admirer of Potier, and went more frequently to the *Variétés*, where Potier,

at that time, was in high force, than he did to any other theatre.

"Potier," he once said, "is not a man, but a laugh: you look at his face, and laugh: you look at his legs, and laugh: he speaks or is silent—you laugh: he is angry or pleased, merry or sad—you laugh, laugh, laugh!"

Of John Kemble*, as a man, he always spoke in terms of affection—of unqualified respect for, and admiration of, him as an actor. He entertained a high opinion, too, of some points in Kean's acting. But his praises of Miss O'Neill were boundless. Certainly, the French stage could produce nothing at all comparable with her for sensibility, tenderness, and pathos—it possessed nothing so exquisitely feminine. The phrase currently attributed to him respect-

* The following anecdote of John Kemble is characteristic:—A few evenings before he quitted Paris, on his way to Lausanne, he was one of a large party at Talma's house. Garat, the celebrated singer, then in his decline, was present. To please Kemble he was prevailed upon to sing. When he had concluded, Talma, approaching Kemble, said, "My dear Kemble, has he not still a very beautiful voice? charming? sweet, eh?"—"Yes," replied Kemble, "he has indeed; it is wonderfully mellow."—"Ah!—yes, it is—as we say, *mielleux*." After the lapse of a full quarter of an hour, Kemble called Talma towards him, and, taking a huge pinch of snuff, said: "My dear Talma, I have been thinking of that: *I* said 'mellow,' *you* said '*mielleux*:' but we meant the same thing."

ing that accomplished actress, that “she had tears in her voice,” he *might* have applied to her, but it was not his own ; it had been used as the affected compliment to Mademoiselle Duchesnois for years before. Yet it was more justly said of Miss O’Neill ; for “the tears in the voice” of Mademoiselle Duchesnois were nothing more than a continual whine. But there was no similarity between these actresses. The fine qualities of the latter, which were few, were rather Siddonian ; besides which, her person was—— The only safe method of getting over this ground will be by saying that Mademoiselle Duchesnois was prodigiously—unlike Miss O’Neill. If, as Talma said of her, and of her great rival, Mademoiselle Georges, that to form a fine actress both must be compounded into one ; it might be said that, to form a SIDDONS, he himself must have been thrown into the crucible along with them.

It has been frequently said that Madame Pasta had received instructions from him. This is not true, in the sense intended to be implied. That Madame Pasta had deeply studied him there can be little doubt ; and those who have seen that eminent artist in

Medea may form a tolerably good notion of what Talma was. Her acting, both for style and quality, approaches more nearly to his than any I ever saw. But she never received lessons from him. The first time he ever saw her perform was at the Italian theatre in Paris, and upon that occasion I had the pleasure of accompanying him. The opera was "Tancredi." In the early part of the piece, Tancredi (Madame Pasta) has a long scene with Amenaide, during which the performer has scarcely any thing to *say*. Talma was deeply attentive; and, in reply to an expression of dissatisfaction uttered by a lady who was with him, he said, somewhat sharply, "*Elle écoute bien, au moins.*"

However odd it may seem, *to listen well* is no slight qualification in an actor, as may be proved by its rarity. At the conclusion of the performance, he exclaimed, "*Allons, voilà une diablesse qui ira loin !*"

I shall conclude this paper by giving a copy of one of his English letters, the first, I believe, that has ever appeared in print. Yet I give it, not so much as a specimen of his English, as because it is characteristic. The few errors in the original are here retained.

" Paris April 4th 1819.

" MY DEAR SIR,

" I HAVE received your letter and I answer you by the return of post. The two works you mention are exactly those I wish to have* (they are in 8vos.) I will take the three guineas print of the Kemble's family. I return you many thanks for your kind offers. My wife would like to have two or three morning gowns of fancy muslin at a moderate price, say, from twenty to thirty shillings a-piece ; but those kind of bargains are not under your cognizance, and I suppose you are a better smugler than a buyer. Perhaps Mrs.—— would be so kind as to make that purchase. it will take very little place for you can put the whole in your shirt or in your hat. besides you have learnt me not to have the least doubt of your abilities in that line of trade.† If you quit London in a fortnight you will not find me here at your arrival, for I set off to-morrow to pay a Visit to my Subjects of the South and levy my usual tribute. you will be so kind as

* Douville's French and English Grammar.

† I had succeeded in conveying a silk gown from him to his sister in England.

to keep the objects you will bring over for me, till my return in Paris which will be about the middle of june. Pray our kind remembrance to Mr. and Mrs.—and to all those who have not forgot me.

“ Believe me, my dear Sir,

“ Your sincere friend

“ TALMA.

“ *Rue de Rivoli, No. 14.*

“ N.B. In case you make the purchase of the gowns, you must take two yards more than ordinary for each, my wife not being of small dimension in length and breadth : besides our french women are partial to trimmings, fur-belowes, flounces, and I don’t know what.”

In the comic acting of the French there are *degrees*; and something much below supreme excellence may be capable of affording considerable pleasure. In their tragic acting, there are *none*: there, it is all or nothing: mediocrity—even though it be “the perfection of mediocrity”—is positively insupportable. The death of Talma was fatal to French tragedy. At the event, Melpomene wept with deep, yet rational, grief; for it left her without consolation, since it left her without hope.

RECOLLECTIONS
OF
CERTAIN FRENCH ACTORS.

No. III.

MADEMOISELLE DESBROSSES.—PHILIPPE.—
GARDEL.—MADAME DUGAZON.

“ Come like shadows, so depart.”—SHAKSPEARE.

“ Théâtre Royal de l'Opéra-Comique.

“ Au Bénéfice de

“ MADEMOISELLE DESBROSSES :

“ Après 47 ans de service !”

It is now (1830) eight or nine years since this extraordinary announcement appeared, and the lady is still extant. I saw her acting, with unabated spirit, in 1826, when she had been upwards of half a century before the public! It was not until a few months ago that she retired from the stage.

The professional career of Mlle. Desbrosses,

VOL. II.

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whilst it furnishes a remarkable instance of theatrical longevity, is curious also in another respect. It commenced long before, was co-eval with, and endured beyond, a period singular in the history of the world. She had frequently contributed to the amusement of Louis XVI. and Marie-Antoinette, and performed in the Court entertainments given upon the occasion of the accession to the throne of those unfortunate personages *nineteen years prior to their execution in 1793!* She had acted in the presence of Robespierre and the other sanguinary heroes of the Reign of Terror; she had received the plaudits of Buonaparte-Consul, and joined in the Court-plays in celebration of the coronation of Napoleon-Emperor, and of his marriage with Marie-Louise; still quietly pursuing her professional avocations, she had witnessed the restoration of the house of her earliest master, and again been called upon to entertain a Bourbon, in the person of Louis the Eighteenth; and, having lived through these wonderful changes, she is now the pensioned servant of the second of the restored dynasty!

Consider the length of its duration, the memorable events with which it was in some

degree connected, and the inextinguishable interest attached to the names of the greater number of the persons for whose entertainment it was from time to time engaged ;—and it may be affirmed that no performer living, or that ever lived, could boast of a career so remarkable as that of Mlle. Desbrosses.

As an actress, this lady was not sufficiently distinguished to warrant an extended notice of her in this place : I introduce her chiefly as a specimen of theatrical *virtù*.* The characters she played were the duennas, the old country-women,† the antiquated aunts, and others of the same age and cast, to which she succeeded

* Should the printer choose to add even one single letter to this word, I warn him that he must do so upon his own responsibility.

† The first part I saw her perform was that of an old servant at a village inn, in Grètry's opera, *Les Méprises par Ressemblance*. She comes on the stage, and, suddenly meeting a person who bears a resemblance to her master's son, so striking as to perplex her provincial senses, she sings her astonishment in these words :—

“ Mon Dieu ! Mon Dieu ! Mon Dieu !
Mon Dieu ! Mon Dieu ! Mon Dieu !”

The use of the Sacred Name, as an exclamation, is so common in French conversation (the very children lisping it in their little fits of impatience), as positively to smother one's sense of its impropriety ; yet I must confess that, upon the occasion in question, my *unlicensed* organ was somewhat shocked at hearing it sung to a comic tune, forty or fifty times, without the intervention of another word.

upon the retirement of Madame Gonthier. The latter I never saw; but, if she fairly deserved the praises lavished on her by the French critics—if she was really as superior in talent to her successor as her encomiasts would maintain, (for Mlle. Desbrosses, though not excellent, was by no means a bad actress,) she could have been nothing less than a Mrs. DAVENPORT.

PHILIPPE—the original Richard in Grètry's opera, *Richard Cœur-de-Lion*.*

I met with him at the village of Saint-Martin, in Normandy, where he was then living (1819). He was nearly eighty years of age; yet his appearance sufficiently confirmed the reputation he had formerly enjoyed of being one of the handsomest men of his time. He was tall, robust, and perfectly upright; and so active (notwithstanding the gout, which was just then coquetting with him), that I found him in the fields busily engaged in snaring birds. He had lately married a young wife—(for as he spoke of the lady as “*Madame mon épouse*,” it was impossible there could have been any lapse or informality in the ceremony)—and

* First produced in 1784.

was gaily looking forward to the plagues and pleasures of paternity.

Philippe, at one period of his life, had enjoyed a flattering, though somewhat dangerous, celebrity : his visits to the *Petit Trianon*, the favourite retreat of the Queen, being of too frequent occurrence to pass without exciting malicious observation. Indeed, it was hinted in the scandalous chronicle, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, it formed one of the accusations broadly urged against Marie-Antoinette, that the numerous attendances of the player at Trianon were for a less innocent purpose than merely to assist in the preparation of the private theatricals at that rural palace. To prove, or to disprove, the charge, would now be scarcely possible ; but a trifling anecdote which I will relate would induce one to discredit it altogether.

One morning I called upon him at his cottage. After a little conversation upon ordinary topics, he abruptly adverted to the French Revolution ; and, presently rising from his seat, he opened a little drawer in his escritoire, and took from it a miniature portrait which had been abstracted from its setting.

“ Do you know who this was ? ” said he.

"Yes ; the late Queen."

"No doubt you have heard something about that affair?"

There was no great difficulty in guessing at what affair he alluded to, so, without hesitation, I replied that I had.

Now, when an affair of gallantry, of which he was, or of which he would fain have it believed he was, the hero, happens to be the question—of all earthly coxcombs, a French coxcomb is, beyond all manner of comparison, the most accomplished, the most profound, the most imperturbable ; and Philippe, upon the present occasion, maintained, with exemplary devotion, the claim of his countrymen to that distinction.*

* The richest piece of coxcombray I ever witnessed was displayed at a *soirée* in Paris. A young French officer was leaning over the chair of a newly-married lady, talking to her with considerable assiduity and earnestness, whilst the lady's husband (by many years her senior) was at a little distance from them, engaged at *Ecarté*. It was easy to read in the lady's countenance that she was but little interested in any thing the fop might be saying to her; but he, perceiving that his attentions had excited the jealous notice of the husband, persisted in addressing her. No sooner was the game ended than *Monsieur le Mari* rose from his seat, walked towards his lady, and deliberately led her to the other side of the room. The young officer, with the utmost coolness, turned towards a looking-glass; and, just drawing his fingers through his hair, adjusting his cravat, and (with an air of *suffisance* which

He continued : “ This portrait was presented to me—it was then set in brilliants—by the divine Original ! Oh, my God ! when I recall to my mind all that—— ! But don’t believe any thing you may have heard about us. Her majesty presented me with this in token of her approbation of me in my professional character—nothing more ; and, whatever may be told you, don’t you be wicked enough to think any thing to the contrary.”

The latter portion of this sentence he uttered with a particular emphasis upon each word of it : drawing himself up at the same time, and accompanying his abnegation with a smile, which clearly indicated the sense in which, whether true or false, he wished it to be taken.

Not only as having himself been an eminent actor was Philippe a desirable acquaintance to any one interested in theatrical history ; but also as he had been the contemporary of most of those whose names have been rendered familiar to us by Grimm and other memoir-writers of the time. Living in a secluded

none so well as a Frenchman can assume) eyeing his exquisite reflection in the mirror, he negligently muttered—“ *J'aime faire des jaloux, moi.*”

village,* he was delighted to meet with any one with whom he could talk upon his favourite subjects — music and the drama ; and, his memory being clear and his manner vivacious, he would “ fight his battles o'er again ” with all the energy of youth.

An old man of celebrity, separated, as it were, by a long series of years from the period in which he earned his fame, be he politician or player, poet or soldier, seems like a link between the living and the dead ; and one cannot converse with such a person (not having known him in those days) without a sensation bordering on that which one might be supposed to experience should some historical character rise from the grave to gratify one’s own special curiosity. The name of La Fayette, for instance, figured in the lessons in history received by many of us in our earliest youth : it was connected with events which, even then, were long gone by and had become historical : think of

* In his immediate neighbourhood resided Nivelon (formerly a celebrated dancer), the mention of whose name may probably revive recollections of the pleasures of their early days in those who remember the Opera (in London) in the blessed times “ when Venus wore a hoop and flowers, like a lady of quality as she is; and Apollo a pink satin jacket, and a powdered wig, as a gentleman ought to do.”

that—and then—behold the identical man ! Thus, I saw Philippe and I thought of Sterne ; and of his visit to the *Opéra Comique* ; and of the French officer and the tall German ; and of the scene with the beggar in the long dark entry—for the theatre at which Philippe had acted (many years ago demolished) was that which was visited by Yorick—and, from even this slight connexion with one of our own long-departed worthies, additional interest attached to him. * * * *

Philippe abounded in anecdotes of the literary men and artists of his time. But he of whom he spoke most frequently, and whom he most delighted to honour, was Grètry—certainly the most exquisite melodist, the most natural and *intellectual** composer, France has ever produced.

He related to me an anecdote connected with the production of *Richard Cœur-de-Lion*, the most popular of Grètry's works : and, as that opera is well known in this country, (and,

* This epithet is used without reference to the question of the *Intellectuality of music* (as an art). Nothing more is intended by it than that the music of Grètry accomplished the object of conveying, or of assisting, *Ideas*, more frequently and distinctly than that of any other French composer. In proof of this, numerous examples from his works might be cited.

indeed, I believe it is the only one of the same composer known at all,) I may venture to repeat it here.

Grètry was anxious to infuse into the celebrated romance (by the singing of which Blondel makes his vicinity to the Castle known to the royal prisoner,) the antique spirit of the music of the Troubadours — to fashion it to the character of the time of the Crusades — and he succeeded. But this one little melody, so remarkable for its apparent ease and simplicity, and almost unrivalled for tenderness and pathos, was the result of extraordinary labour: it was upwards of a month in hand, and cost the composer more time and thought than nearly all the rest of the opera taken together! “Your easy writing’s d—d hard reading;” and, as a corollary to this assertion, it may be remarked that few, when they praise a passage in a work of literature or of art *for its ease*, reflect upon the intense study by which such an effect may have been achieved.

Grètry, in this instance, was heartily seconded by his performers. The situation alluded to was, at that time, new to the stage. The scene was so contrived that, although both Richard and Blondel were visible to the audi-

ence, they were unseen by each other : hence the arrangement of what is technically termed the “by-play” between the actors was difficult ; and Philippe assured me that, independently of the general rehearsals, which were numerous, he and Clairval (the Blondel) remained in the theatre sixteen days successively —after the other performers had left it—practising various modes of executing this one scene, till they had perfectly satisfied themselves as to which would be the most effective. This labour was not without its reward : the extraordinary sensation excited by the performance has been recorded by the critics of the time, and alluded to by Grètry himself in his *Memoirs*.

It has always appeared to me that the French actors, even of the present time, are well studied in their business :* every thing is prepared : not the most trifling point is left to chance : besides which, although each does his best, they seem to act less for individual dis-

*I do not mean merely that they are perfect in their words ; for, as Talma once replied to a question of mine upon that point—“ How ! perfect in what he has to *say* ! A French actor would no more dare to show himself before his audience imperfect in what he has to deliver, than to appear before them drunk ! ”

play than for general effect ; and to these circumstances, perhaps, rather than to any real superiority in the French actors, as compared with some of our own, may be attributed the superior effect of their performances.*

Philippe, however, (whom, shortly after my meeting with him at St. Martin, I saw at Paris,) thought that the same care was not then bestowed upon the "getting up" of pieces as in his days.

The last time I ever met him was one evening after he had been amusing himself at a rehearsal at the Comic Opera. "Ah ! it was no longer the same thing ! It was pretty well, but he had detected negligences which, in his time, — ! No matter ; there was no help for it : acting was less an art than formerly ; it was becoming a trade." This might have been partly true ; but it was in part to be attributed to the querulousness of age, and to the natural partiality of an old man to the by-

* I had the gratification of being with Mr. Kemble in the orchestra of the Théâtre Français, at the last theatrical performance which that great actor ever witnessed. The comedy of *La Fille d'Honneur* was played by Mademoiselle Mars and the *élite* of the company. At the conclusion of the performance I said, "This is fine acting, is it not, sir?"—"Yes," he replied, "it is very fine acting, but I have seen as fine ; though 'tis very long since I saw a *play altogether* so well acted."

gone time: the generality of French actors, for the study they bestow on their profession, still deserve to be ranked as artists. Poor Philippe! his earthly engagement is cancelled.

GARDEL.—Since, to use a French idiom, this name has acquired a renown altogether European, it were needless to explain that it is the property of the inventor of the exquisite Ballets of *Psyché*, *Telemaque*, *Proserpine*, *Paul et Virginie*, *Le Jugement de Paris*, and many others; most of which are familiar to a London audience, and all of them remarkable for their elegant taste and classic purity. In addition to the reputation he enjoys as author of these charming works, he is remembered as a first-rate dancer, at a period when (in France, at least,) dancing was considered a first-rate art. He had the honour of attending professionally George the Fourth, when Prince of Wales (an honour of which he was not a little proud), and of teaching him—and he lays particular stress on this point—the *Menuet de la Cour*, which the young Prince performed with surpassing grace.

“In what essential particular, Monsieur Gar-

del, does the present style of dancing differ from that of the old school?"

It is about eight years since I asked him this question : * were the same question proposed to him now, his answer, I apprehend, would be even less favourable to the existing manufacturers of *Pirouettes* and *Entrechats*.

He replied : "Formerly we had three distinct styles : the Serious, the Comic, and the *Demi-caractère*; now they are all confounded into one, and that one is faulty. With the exception of" — (here he cited four or five names, amongst which were those of Albert, Mademoiselle Bigottini, and Fanni Bias) — "With these exceptions, our dancers seem to think that the perfection of the art consists in *Pirouettes* and *Tours de force*. This is *jumping*; which is to *dancing* what a melodrame of the Bouvelard is to a tragedy of Racine. To dance well requires not only the exercise of the legs, but the body, the arms, the head, must dance : ay, the inside of the head as well as the outside. Your jumpers (*sauiteurs*) may do very well without brains ; but, to become an accomplished dancer, a little of that commodity is requisite."

* This paper was written in 1830.

But, truly, that is a commodity in which dancers do not abound. Vestris the Great possessed but little, and Vestris the Greater, still less: and, since the deficiency cannot, in so great a number of cases as exist, be attributed to original mal-organization—for dancers do not come pirouetting into the world—I shall ask leave to account for it by a short and simple theory of my own. It is this: that, by incessant jumping and hopping, and skipping and twirling, the seat of intellect is shaken down from the head into the heels; and there, undergoing certain changes, its produce, which otherwise would have taken the form of wit, sense, judgment, and so forth, is given out in *petits battements*, *entrechats*, and *coups d'aplomb*. There! and if Diderot were alive again I would defy him to disprove it.

But Noverre, who wrote a paper in the French Encyclopædia on the History of Dancing, and was, besides, a correspondent of Voltaire's? Gardel himself? Deshayes, too? and D'Egville, who has preserved, in their proper case, as sound a set of brains as any in England? True. But they are striking exceptions—(they are *composers*, too)—and the rule is not affected by these. And, indeed, the French them-

selves, who must be allowed to have enjoyed peculiar opportunities for observation, have summed up their notions on the subject in a phrase which has become proverbial: for, when they would say that such-a-one is uncommonly stupid, or a greater fool than any one has a right to be, the expression is "*Il est bête comme un danseur.*" As for my ingenious *theory*, should it be found incapable of standing alone, it may be propped up with this *fact*: that very many of the professors of the pleasing art are the offspring of persons of the lowest condition — the children of house-porters, washerwomen, &c.— and are, from a tender age, kept closely at a laborious exercise, to the neglect (sometimes) of the very rudiments of mental education.*

* M. Gardel having once forgotten an appointment at the Opera with a celebrated dancer, he received from her a note intended simply to acquaint him with her own punctuality — that she had been to the theatre to meet him. Owing to a slight error in orthography, and a contempt for the dignity of capitals, it appeared in the following equivocal form: — "Ma demoiselle A——y est Vénus pour Monsieur Gardel!"

As a pendant to this, I will place a specimen of the unaffected *impudence* of a dancer. A young lady had just made a tolerably successful *début* at the Academie-Royale, where she was dancing for about *thirty pounds a-year*, (700 francs!) As a friend of Mr. Waters, I proposed to her an engagement for London. "I will tell you," said she; "I have just refused 8000 francs from Bordeaux: I have been offered 20,000 to go

The French are not to be compared with the English for their management of, or their dexterity in, field sports; yet are they fond of sporting — after a fashion of their own.

I had been passing the day with the Premier Maître. After dinner — it being a fine summer's evening — "Come," said he, "let us go a-shooting." Though not a very expert marksman, I assented to the proposal, yet wondering at the time of day selected for such an amusement; and still more, as to whereabout any good shooting was to be had in the ancient city of Paris! I was not long in doubt; for, hats and guns being brought, Monsieur Gardel (accompanied by Madame and another lady, and followed by two gentlemen and myself,) led the way into his own garden — a tolerably spacious one — at the back of his house. *There stood six chairs placed in a line.* We took our seats (the ladies attending as spectators), and sat gravely popping at the sparrows for a good hour — much more, I believe, to their alarm than their injury. The sports ended, our talented host went to the Opera to superintend the performance of one of his own delightful ballets.

to Naples: propose to me something worth accepting, and we'll talk about it."

If I thought this slight notice of a man eminent in his way required an apology, I should seek it in the opportunity it has afforded me of recording his opinion of a style which is evidently leading to the destruction of an agreeable art — an opinion which, proceeding from such an authority, may serve to confirm the principles of criticism maintained by some of our most intelligent writers on the performances at the King's Theatre, and (aided by the illustrations of Mademoiselle Taglioni) to correct a vitiated taste in the public.

MADAME DUGAZON.— She was the original Nina (a character well known here through the affecting performances of Madame Pasta), at the *Opera-Comique* in 1786. I have seen a picture of her, painted at the time, wherein she is represented of a form resembling that of the “Meditation”—a well known picture of Sir Joshua's : I saw her a few years ago — (she had then long quitted the theatre) — and her figure exceeded those of — any two of our most extensive ladies now on the stage.

On this the only occasion of my seeing her, Philippe was present. It was many years since they had met; and the meeting of two persons apparently at the point of terminating

lives, the business of which had been to amuse, had something really affecting in it. They seemed to feel this themselves, for, without speaking, they both burst into tears. After a little while, Madame Dugazon smilingly said, “Well, Philippe, should you have recognized Nina ? ”

“Sing me the romance,” said he, “and I ’ll tell you.”

Without a reply, she sang it ; and, though in a voice faltering from age, she threw into it an expression of such profound pathos, that it was easy to perceive there was no exaggeration in the praises bestowed upon her by those who remembered her performances. Having finished it, she again burst into tears ; and, taking Philippe by the hand, she said, “*Voilà, mon vieil ami, voilà la dernière fois que la pauvre Dugazon la chantera.*” She soon resumed her accustomed gaiety, and amused herself at cards during the remainder of the evening.

I have no more to tell of her : and my principal motive for mentioning her is, that it gives me an opportunity of relating a dream :— and —and, at the risk of receiving my diploma from the College of Old Women, I *will* relate it.

I had neither seen nor heard of Madame Dugazon for many months. On the night of the 21-2 of September, 1820, I dreamed a dream. Methought—that, I believe, is the orthodox beginning—methought I ascended the steps of the Church of St. Roch, in the Rue St. Honoré. As I reached the portal, which was hung with black, the *Suisse* advanced, saying, “Once in, sir, you must remain in.”

I entered; and, having made the tour of the church, roundabout which were lying corpses prepared for interment, I again reached the door. There still stood the Swiss.

“I told you, sir, that, once in, you must remain in.”

“What is the reason of that?”

“There is to be a funeral.”

“Who is dead?”

“Madame Dugazon.”

At the same moment a funeral procession ascended the steps, and—I awoke.

This was at about *three o'clock in the morning*. The dream tormented me, I could not sleep again, and, at an earlier hour than usual, I arose. Whilst at breakfast, a brother of Talma called upon me. I related my dream, and (as I deserved to be) was laughed at for my pains.

He left me; and, within an hour afterwards, I received a message from Talma himself, requesting I would go to him immediately. I found him walking about his garden, considerably agitated. After a few moments' silence, he exclaimed—"This confounds all my notions. While I was laughing at your dream, which my brother related to me—'these English are almost as great dreamers as the Germans,' I said—in came my friend R——. I asked him the news. 'There is nothing,' said he;—'O—yes—*poor Dugazon died at three o'clock this morning.*'"

I desire no more, good reader, than that you would place this in your collection of *extraordinary coincidences*: for an extraordinary coincidence—at least—it unquestionably was.

RECOLLECTIONS
OR
CERTAIN FRENCH ACTORS.
No. IV.

FROGERE AND THE EMPEROR PAUL.

"Rit bien qui rit le dernier."—FRENCH PROVERB.

"Thou'rt marvellous merry, and thy wit is keen,
But better hadst thou pluck the Turk by the beard
Than shoot thy bolts at me. Bethink thee on't."

OLD PLAY.

FROGERE had been a comic actor, of no very great celebrity, in Paris. He went to Russia, where he became the favourite and the intimate associate of the Emperor Paul. It was upon this account only he was remarkable. I knew him but slightly; nor should I mention him but for the very odd way in which our acquaintance began, and for the purpose of repeating an anecdote he related to me, highly characteristic of his Imperial playmate.

I was one day at the *Café Anglais* with Monsieur T—.

“That little man coming towards us,” said my companion, “is Frogère.”

It is necessary I should premise that I had frequently been mistaken for an actor at the *Odéon* of the name of Davide.

Frogère took his seat at our table, spoke to Monsieur T—, and, patting me familiarly on the head, asked me what the deuce ailed me that I acted so seldom. Guessing the cause of his error, I mumbled a reply, and allowed him to ask me two or three questions respecting proceedings at the theatre, before I undid him. It was the most extraordinary resemblance he had ever met with, &c. &c.; and, having exhausted his expressions of wonderment, away he went.

Walking along the Boulevard Montmartre, a few days after this, I saw Frogère skipping across the road towards me, gesticulating, and evidently charged with something marvellous to communicate.

“My dear!” exclaimed he, “I’ll tell you something will make you die of laughing. Three or four days ago I went into the *Café Anglais* and there was T— at dinner with

an Englishman. Well, will you believe it? I talked to the Englishman for five good minutes, thinking all the while I was talking to you."

" Well, Monsieur Frogère, and are you quite sure you are right this time ?"

He stood amazed !

" My dear sir," said he, " do me the kindness to answer me one question : had I the honour of bowing to you, in the Palais-Royal, about half-an-hour ago ?"

I assured him I had not been there all that day.

" Why, then, this is the Devil's own mystification ! What will my poor friend Davide think of me ? It must have been him, then, I met there ; and, (instead of approaching him familiarly, as usual,) mistaking him for you, I passed him with a bow of formal civility !"

Modern refinement has abolished the office of King's Jester, or Court Fool ; but, although there is no longer any acknowledged stipendiary dignified with that title, yet, in more European Courts than one, the duties of the office are sedulously performed by some " loyal volunteer," bearing the honorary distinction of *Butt*. In point of respectability, however, the profes-

sors of the olden time had the advantage, inasmuch as there are upon record several hard hits given by the Fools to the wise men, or Kings; whereas, in the case of the modern amateur, the give-and-take is not fairly divided—the *give* being all on the side of the master, and the *take* on that of the man.

The companion of a crowned head stands in a similar predicament with the lap-dog in the lion's den, or rather in that of Ali Pacha's pet lion with Ali himself. The ferocious and tyrannical Ali would take whatever liberties he pleased with the lion, but he never would permit the lion to use the slightest freedom with him: he invariably resented any attempt to abuse, by too great familiarity, his condescension: and, upon such occasions, would presently teach his shaggy associate to remember that, though tolerated for his master's amusement, he was nothing but a lion after all.

Upon re-considering the point, I doubt the aptness of this second illustration: European monarchs are not Ali Pachas, nor are their butts lions. Frogère, however, as I have been assured upon other authority besides his own, was not the mere butt of his Imperial patron, but

really was upon terms of more equal familiarity with him than it might be supposed a man in his station would have been admitted to.

Yet easy and pleasant as was the friendship which for so long a time subsisted between these two eminent personages, it did once happen that the player was provided with leisure and opportunity for considering the important question, Whether it be altogether prudent or safe to make very free indeed with an Emperor of all the Russias?"

At supper, one evening, at the Emperor's table, some one present took occasion to pay the illustrious host a compliment at the expense of Peter the Great. The Emperor, turning to Frogère, said—

" This is really robbing Peter to pay Paul : 'tis hardly fair, is it, Frogère ?"

" Quite the reverse, sire," replied the actor ; " for the reputation your Majesty will leave behind you will hardly tempt any one to rob Paul in return."

Now, though this was almost as good a thing as any one need wish to say, it somehow happened that his Majesty did not appear to be in the least tickled by it ; and as his Majesty did not condescend to honour it with his imperial

laugh, no one else could presume to notice it by such a symptom of approbation. In fact, the joke, with all its merit, was a total failure; at which nobody was so much astonished as the perpetrator of it himself.

After a short time the Emperor withdrew, and the company separated.

Frogère retired to his own apartment. He was any thing but happy in his mind. His jest had fallen flat; and such a mishap to a professed joker is as serious a calamity as the failure of a commercial speculation to a merchant. But to what strange cause could he attribute its ill success? The joke was a good joke, there was no denying it; and, were it otherwise, the Emperor was not so squeamish a critic but that he had laughed heartily at many a worse. He thought, and thought—and thought again; but, since his cogitations availed him nothing, (he being still unable, with all his sagacity, to discover what could have occasioned his failure,) he got into bed, and, like a wise fool as he was, fell fast asleep.

It was the middle of a Russian winter. In the dead of the night Frogère was aroused by a loud knocking at his chamber-door. He arose and opened it, and, greatly to his asto-

nishment, an officer, accompanied by four soldiers armed to the very teeth, entered the room. Frogère, having no reason to expect such a visit, naturally concluded that the officer (an old acquaintance of his, who had had the honour of being of the Emperor's party on the previous evening) had mistaken his room for that of some other person. Alas ! he was speedily convinced that there was no mistake, but that the untimely and alarming visit was indeed to him : the officer exhibited the Emperor's warrant for his arrest, and his immediate banishment to Siberia !!

The effect produced on him by this terrible announcement may—to use a phrase less remarkable for its novelty than for its convenience upon occasions of this nature—"may be more easily conceived than described." The idea of a trip to Siberia has shaken firmer nerves than those of poor Frogère. He wept—he screamed—he knelt—he tore his hair. What crime had he committed to draw down upon him so heavy a punishment? Could he not obtain a short delay? Of a day—a few hours only—merely, then, till he could see the Emperor, that he might throw himself at his Majesty's feet?

His supplications were in vain : the Emperor's commands were precise and peremptory ; and, if ever there was an absolute monarch who allowed his mandate to be trifled with, certainly it was not the Emperor Paul. All that the unfortunate man could obtain from the officer, who was his friend, was just sufficient delay to enable him to throw a small quantity of clothes and linen into a trunk ; and, having done this, he was led forth.

A carriage, guarded by a sufficiently strong body of cavalry, was in waiting ; and, more dead than alive, he was lifted into it : a soldier, armed with a brace of pistols, and a sabre drawn, taking his seat on each side of him. The officer having seen that the windows of the carriage were carefully closed, so as to prevent the prisoner's communicating with any one from without, headed the cavalcade, gave the word, and they started, at a brisk trot, on their formidable journey.

How long they had travelled till they made their first halt the prisoner knew not, for he was in total darkness, and his guards were dumb to all his inquiries : they were strictly forbidden to speak to the prisoner ; and few Russian soldiers are so much in love with the

knout as to disobey orders : but, reckoning time by his sighs, and groans, and lamentations, it seemed to him an eternity.

At length the carriage-door was opened. It was broad day ; but he was not long permitted to enjoy the blessed light of the sun, for he was instantly blind-folded, and in that state led into a miserable hovel. Here the bandage was removed from his eyes, and he found himself in a small room, the windows of which being closed, was dimly lighted by a solitary torch. Some coarse food was placed on a rough wooden table, and signs were made to him that he should eat. But a few hours ago he was revelling amidst the splendour and enjoying the luxuries of a palace, princes the partakers of his pleasures, a mighty potentate his boon companion. Now—disgraced ; a banished and forlorn man ; a wretched shed for his resting-place ; his fare so little tempting he would not yesterday have offered it to a starving mendicant ; surrounded by faces which, for the sympathy he would have implored, struck hopelessness down into the very bottom of his heart as he did but look upon them ; a traveller on a dreary, dreary journey, which, when ended, no tongue should say him “ welcome,”

nor should his soul rejoice as he should utter
“Here will be my dwelling!”

SIBERIA! In that one word seemed to him to be concentrated all of human suffering; and, as he wildly paced the mud floor of the comfortless apartment, no sound escaped his lips, save only Siberia—Siberia!

That extremes meet is somewhat a trite observation. A trifling incident converted the agony of despair—and such was poor Frogère’s—into a paroxysm of joy.

The officer who commanded the escort entered the hovel, attended by an estafette. Frogère had not seen him since he got into the carriage on the previous night, nor was he aware that he had accompanied him so far on the journey. He was the only person of the whole number with whom the unfortunate man was acquainted; and the appearance of a familiar face was to him, in his present unhappy situation, a source of happiness unutterable. He was about to rush into the arms of his quondam friend, but a slight movement of the hand, and a look of withering sternness, sufficiently convinced him that such a demonstration of friendship was not very cordially desired by the other party. He prepared to speak, but a finger on

the lip constrained him to silence. The officer went towards the light, and sealed a packet which he held in his hand ; and, having delivered it to the estafette, to whom he enjoined the utmost possible speed, he ordered the guard to post themselves outside the door.

Being left alone with his prisoner, and having again made a sign of silence—

“Frogère,” said he, in an under-voice, “Frogère, here we part ; the officer who will take charge of you to the next station is in attendance. Tell me—what can I—? And yet I hardly dare : the Emperor’s commands are not to be disobeyed with impunity ; and should it be discovered that I—. No matter ; to serve an old friend I will run the hazard of my disobedience. Tell me, then, what can I do for you on my return to Moscow ?”

The luckless Frogère burst into tears ; and, instead of replying directly to the friendly inquiry, he indulged in wild exclamations on the severity of the punishment for a crime, the nature of which he had yet to learn.

His companion looked at him with amazement.

“ Yet to learn ! Are you mad, Frogère ? Surely you are ; and you must have been (as we all thought you) mad last night, or you

never would have ventured that bitter sarcasm ;”—and he added, in a still lower voice,—“the more keenly felt as it was not altogether destitute of truth.”

“Good Heavens ! and it is for a trifle like *that* that I am to be——?”

“This is no time, Frogère, to waste in words : mine is the last friendly face you are likely to see for the rest of your long journey. The Emperor, as you well know, is implacable in his resentments : you cannot hope for pardon : so make up your mind to bear your punishment like a man, and tell me what I can do for you at Moscow.”

But the mind of the traveller was too bewildered to think upon any other service his friend might render him, than the only one which his friend (like many other friends upon trying occasions) declared to be exactly the one *he could not* perform for him : it was to intercede in his behalf with the Emperor. It was impossible :—but for any thing else, he would “raise Heaven and earth,” “go through fire and water,” &c. &c. &c.

And, truly, there were many other modes of service open, not the least important of which was the disposal of his property—for not one

particle of it (save the wearing-apparel already mentioned) had he been allowed to take with him. He had money and some valuable jewels ; and, provided nothing to his disadvantage should *come out* upon the examination of his papers, it was possible that those might escape confiscation. In that case, had he any friends or relations in France to whom he wished they should be transmitted ? In the event of a contrary result to the scrutiny, a vast deal of trouble would be saved to him and to his heirs for ever.—No ; he could think of nothing, he could think of nobody : his mind was all engrossed by the calamity which had befallen that one hapless member of his family who was at that moment on the high road to Siberia ; nor was it capable of entertaining any other idea.

“ Then,” said his friend, “ I must think for you, and I must act for you. Should your property, as I have said, escape confiscation, I will deposit it in safe hands, and on your return you can claim it.”

“ My return ! am I not banished for life ? Is there, then, a hope that—— ?”

“ For life !” interrupted the officer ; “ do you imagine you are banished for life ? Ha ! ha ! No wonder, then, you are so grieved

at your departure. No, my dear friend ; and happy am I to be the means of pouring consolation into your bosom. Courage, courage, my dear Frogère ! thirty years are soon past, and then——.”

“Thirty years!!!” groaned the luckless jester.

But there was no time for farther conversation. The fresh escort was in readiness ; and the eyes of the victim having been bandaged as before, he was replaced in the carriage. His friend, at parting, kindly pressed his hand, and placing therein a small sum of money, whispered, “ You will find this more useful on your arrival at the place of your destination than you are now aware of. Courage ! Farewell ! ” The blinds of the carriage were again carefully closed, the word to proceed was given, and away went the cavalcade, much faster than was agreeable to at least one of the party.

A Frenchman is proverbially the gayest creature in the universe, and blest with greater aptitude than the native of any other country to accommodate himself to disagreeable circumstances. His language, too, furnishes him with a set of phrases admirably calculated to assist his philosophy, when assailed by the common misfortunes to which poor humanity is liable.

He loses his umbrella or his wife : his dog is stolen, or his mistress is unfaithful : he is caught in an intrigue or in a shower of rain ; and he is speedily reconciled to the event by an "*Allons, puisque——*," or a "*C'est une petite contrariété*," or "*un petit malheur——*"; or (if either or all of these should fail) by that last refuge of heroical endurance, the infallible "*ça m'est égal*." But a "*Thirty years in Siberia*," albeit it makes a promising appearance on paper as a title for a new book, is something more than a *petite contrariété*, and it is not by any means *égal*; so that poor Frogère finding that not one of these modes of consolation applied to his peculiar case, and no other source of comfort occurring to him, he unconditionally surrendered himself to despair.

For many hours he rode on in total darkness, and in silence unbroken but by his own unavailing lamentations : for his guards were again debarred of speech, either to their prisoner or to each other.

At length they stopped. He underwent the same ceremonies as before : his eyes were bandaged ; he was led out of the vehicle ; and when he was permitted the use of sight, he found himself in another miserable hut, drearily

lighted by the flickering glare of two or three burning twigs of the fir-tree. Here another coarse repast was presented to him ; and, when he had partaken of it, the escort was relieved by a party of fresh men, and again was he hurried forward on his journey.

But upon this occasion the sound of no friendly voice met his ear—all were silent, all were strangers. As nearly as he could guess, he had travelled three nights and three days, with occasional halts, always attended by similar circumstances, when, on the night of the third day, again they halted. His eyes were bound ; but, instead of being allowed to walk, he was carried in the arms of his guards till he found himself placed on a wooden bench. Here he was left for several minutes, wondering why the bandage was not removed as usual. Presently he heard an indistinct whispering. Foot-steps approached him. His hands were suddenly seized, and bound firmly together. He tremblingly asked the reason of this proceeding. No answer was returned. Rapidly, but silently, the upper part of his dress was loosened, and his neck laid bare. His heart sank within him. He began to doubt whether it was intended he should end his mortal journey

by taking so cold a place as Siberia in the way. A word of command was given, and he heard the clank of musketry. The word was given to march ! He was carried forward in the arms of four men ; and, as they proceeded, he heard the regular tramp of many footsteps, before him and behind.—“ Halt !”—He was placed on a seat —his hands were unbound—the bandage was removed from his eyes—and he found himself —at the very same place, of the very same table, in the same apartment where he had cut his unlucky joke, the same persons being present, with the Emperor at their head.

His wild look of terror, astonishment, and doubt, was greeted with a loud shout of laughter—and Frogère fainted.

This had been a sort of Tony Lumpkin's journey, for he had merely been driven backwards and forwards the distance of about half a dozen miles on the same road ; and though, computed by the standard of his own melancholy sensations, the time had appeared much longer, he had, in fact, been absent for but little more than four-and-twenty hours——the Emperor, in disguise, being present at each of the stoppages.

Though this was but a *trick*, the anguish and

the sufferings of the object of it were *real*; and the consequence was a severe illness, from which it was long before poor Frogère recovered. It was, upon the whole, a piece of pleasantry, which, however humorous it may be thought in conception, few but an Emperor Paul would have had the heartlessness to execute.

Some time after this, the player was supping with the “merry monarch,” whilst, at the same hour, a trick was preparing of which Paul himself was to be the *butt*. Not long had they separated when the palace was alarmed. Frogère, with several others, rushed to the Emperor’s apartments, and there lay the imperial joker—a murdered corse!

AFTER-DINNER CHAT.

"A thing of shreds and patches."—SHAKSPEARE.

AN accidental meeting with an old acquaintance, a few days ago, led to an engagement to dine together, that same evening, at a coffee-house.

We are admonished by a foolish old proverb, that "a rolling stone gathers no moss." Un-social old proverb! disingenuous old proverb!—(this is not the first opportunity I have taken to declare my hatred of some of your superannuated, twaddling, community)—tell me, thou lazy, spiritless old proverb! does not the rolling stone gain, by its "truant disposition," something better worth possessing than a sordid blanket of musty moss, wherein selfishly to encase its own dull, selfish self? Does it not acquire roundness, smoothness, polish, and other qualities, which render it pleasant in the sight of men and virtuosi? O thou apa-

thetic old proverb! had my friend and I attended to thy tame warning, we should, incontinently, have entered the nearest tavern, where we should have sat with our chins meeting across a narrow table, till we were tired of each other's company—as completely cut off from all intercourse with the outer world as if we had been immured in a pew of a country church. But, no ! like a couple of gallant snow-balls, we rolled along Pall-Mall, Regent Street, and Bond Street, gathering and increasing as we went, till we bounded against the door of the Clarendon—an avalanche of Nine !

I am not permitted to name my companions : I must, therefore, request of the reader that he will be satisfied with their initials ; at the same time allowing him, for his own private satisfaction, to exercise his undoubted intelligence in filling up the blanks—if he can.

The party, then, consisted of B—, F—, H—, G—, K—, N—, R—, S—, and—(Did you ever hear the phrase uttered, without at once perceiving that the person so introducing himself was fully satisfied of his own superiority to the rest ?)—“*and your humble servant.*”

Being all of us renowned, more—or *less*—for

learning, wit, wisdom, science, philosophy, &c. I cannot but think it would be agreeable to the public to be made acquainted with some of the witty sallies, profound observations, and piquant anecdotes, which, in the superabundance of intellectual wealth, we scattered about us on the evening in question.

During the progress of a dinner, profuse, and of tempting variety, the usual *food* for conversation is the dinner itself. Short and pithy criticisms on the several dishes are the staple for the time. Expletives, even, are prohibited. “Delicious!” or “Exquisite!” or “Perfect!” would either of them be an eulogy of sufficient extent and force to satisfy the vanity of Ude himself. Long speeches *after* dinner are bad enough, but whilst it is going on, they are absolutely intolerable; and, any one who should contemplate the delivery of such an oration as, “I do declare that this is the best *Charlotte à la Russe* I ever tasted in all my life,” would infallibly be coughed down before he could get half way to the end of it. S——, who is a man of acknowledged pleasantry, never opens his mouth at all during dinner, except to put some good thing *into it*; he never allows one to *come out* till the cloth

is removed. This, indeed, is but a parody of his own hit, at table one day, at fat Major C——, a dull gentleman, who eats every thing and says nothing.

"If half as many *good things* came out of your mouth as go into it, by Heavens! Major, you would be the wittiest man in England."

I will neither peremptorily pronounce upon it as a fact, nor pretend to account for it if it be one, but I believe it will generally be found, that a party seated at a long table will either break up into little knots of two or three, or fall into speech-making; that at a round table the conversation will be general and miscellaneous,—in the way of narration, never exceeding a short anecdote; and that at no table at all, but placed in a semi-circle about the fire, one's qualifications for positive story-telling will be brought into requisition. Leaving this point to the consideration of philosophers more profound than myself; and, apprising the reader that, in repeating some portion of the chat which occurred at our table (a *round* one), I hold myself exempt from the observance of order or method—

"We'll e'en to it like French falconers: fly at any thing we see."

THE LACONIC STYLE.

F.—Brevity combined with clearness is the best foundation for the *didactic* style, certainly.

N.—Ay, and for the *epistolary*, too. And the greatest master of the art I ever knew was an old regimental servant of mine. Phil. Parker. You must remember Phil?

F.—What! Briefwit, as he was nicknamed by the regiment? To be sure I do. He was as stiff as a halberd, and his conversation was as stiff as himself. His questions and answers were always short and pointed, like the word of command.

N.—Well, when the army of occupation was ordered home, I procured Phil's discharge, and kept him abroad with me—for he was an excellent servant. On my return to England, after some years' absence, I resolved to spend two or three weeks with my aunt, Lady R—, in Kent, before I proceeded to London. I sent Phil forward; and, having reasons for pitching my tent in the neighbourhood of Pall-Mall, I ordered him (forgetting, as I did, the changes and improvements which had taken place in the metropolis) to secure lodgings for me at the Orange Coffee-house, in Cockspur Street. The next post or two brought me a letter from Phil, in these

very words : “ *Your Honour.—Pulled down !—Honour’s humble servant, Phil. Parker.*” I then wrote to desire he would take apartments for me in Old Suffolk Street—the Scotch Barracks, as it was called—where I had formerly lived. Another letter came from Phil. “ *Your Honour.—Pulled down !—Honour’s humble servant, Phil. Parker.*” My next instructions allowed him the exercise of some little discretion. He was to hire rooms for me *either* at the St. Alban’s Hotel, *or* at some other place in the immediate neighbourhood of Carlton House. Again came a laconic from Phil. “ *Your Honour !—Pulled down !—Honour’s humble servant, Phil. Parker.—P. S. Carlton House pulled down too !*” I then wrote to him that, unless all London was pulled down, he should be in waiting for me, at a certain time, at the Horse-Guards ; and there, punctual to the moment, I found him.

SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

R.—The present age might very well be named the Pull-downian, in contradistinction to the Golden, the Iron, or any other age ; its leading characteristic being its propensity to pull down.

F.—Ay, every thing ; not only old houses, but old opinions, old prejudices, old institutions, old governments. Yet 'tis better, in all these cases, to pull down—but *cautiously*, mind me—than that we should wait till they are overtaken by decay, tumble about our ears, and crush us beneath their ruins.

R.—We must admit that our ancestors were fellows who had a fine notion of durability, at least. All their edifices, whether political, moral, or architectural—absurd, unseemly, and inconvenient as many of them undoubtedly are, or were—seem as if they had intended them to endure for ever. There is scarcely even an old superstition, however absurd it may be, but is so firmly constructed as to require a lusty pummelling with Reason's sledge-hammer to make it give way ; and, for their buildings ! Watch the slow, laborious process of pulling to pieces an old house, with its ponderous beams and massy brick-work ! Why, in less time than they are pulling down *one* house of a hundred or a hundred and fifty years' standing, they will build up *three* of our modern nutshells.

N.—*They* will not endure quite so long.

R.—So much the better for the Modernizer,

or Improver, who shall arise to shed a lustre on the year 1850. They will spare him the trouble of pulling them down; for, by that time, they will, complaisantly, have tumbled down ready to his hands.

K.—That reminds me of an epigram, which I would repeat, if I were sure it would be new to you.

N.—No matter for that, if it be to the point.

S.—And *pointed*—else we'll none on't.

K.—I must leave you to judge of that for yourselves.

On Modern Buildings and Building-leases.

“ This ground,” quoth Tom, “ (thus wealth increases !)
“ I've let on snug, short, building leases ;
Ere long, these houses, new and fine,
By[right, will every one be mine.”
“ If that's your scheme, you're safe,” says Neddy ;
“ For, see!—they're *falling in* already !”

H.—Like some of the new-fangled constitutions.

N.—Because they were *run up* too hastily. Depend on it that nothing durable was ever done in a hurry. This principle holds good in the science of government-making, as well as in the art of house-making ; and in science, art, and literature generally.

H.—The principle is illustrated by Nature herself, in her own works.

N.—True : your trees of the fastest growth are the earliest to decay. Look at the oak. Imagine him, two centuries ago, a mere brat of a tree, of five or ten years old, growing and growing, slowly and imperceptibly. Fancy him the scoff and scorn of his more-admired play-mates of the forest, the *highly-talented* acacia, the *vastly clever* poplar—the precocious, the hasty geniuses of the leafy community—who would make an upward dash of two feet whilst he was carefully improving himself inch by inch ! Behold him now, in his majestic maturity, and inquire where are those sylvan young Roscii who flourished in the days of his youth ? He has outlived whole generations of them ! So it may be said of—.

S.—No more of that, *N*—, an' you love us. We know towards what point you are turning : your defence of the Glorious Constitution.

N.—'Tis true, I was ; but we'll change the conversation. I passed through Grosvenor Street this morning, and saw your house full of carpenters and masons. What an intolerable nuisance it is to have those fellows about one !

Why don't you pull it down and build a new one ?

S..—Because I am not positively out of my senses. It is one of the finest old mansions in town. All that it requires is the removal of a few rotten timbers, and the alteration of two or three fire-places, which are inconvenient and antiquated, and not quite agreeable to our present notions of taste and comfort. It is just *that* I am doing for it : that done, it will be as good a house as ever it was, and I would not exchange it for any other in London.

N..—Thank'ee for saying all I wished to say, though not exactly in the same words. Our Constitution, also, is a fine old edifice, the work of successive architects of glorious power. It has suffered from the wear and tear of Time. It has, in parts, become "inconvenient." It requires alterations and improvements, in order to adapt it to the exigencies of an altered state of society. To that end, let us call in the cautious surveyor, the skilful architect ; but, "as we are not positively out of our senses," for Heaven's sake ! let us not give the noble edifice entirely over to the Demolitionists.

B.—A truce to politics : this is no place for them.

S.—And yet there was a time when the four walls within which we are now sitting resounded to but little else. Are you aware that this part of the Clarendon was once the residence of the Duke of Grafton ? — Junius's Grafton.

K.—Ha ! ha ! ha ! Conceive his Grace sitting here, in this chimney-corner, just after receiving a castigation from the lash of old *Stat Nominis Umbra*. With what *gusto* he must have sipped his claret !

S.—By the by, *K.*—, you were once a great *discoverer* of Junius. Did you ever, really, make out to your own satisfaction who *did* write those letters ?

K.—Not exactly ; but I can tell you with positive certainty—*who did not*.

S.—Thank'ee ; a fact, however small, is valuable.

SOCIAL SUPERSTITIONS.

B.—You were remarking, just now, *R.*—, on the difficulty of destroying even an old superstition. There is one still very prevalent, and not confined to the mere vulgar and illite-

rate. I allude to the notion, that if thirteen persons meet at table, one of the number will surely die within the twelvemonth following ; and I am acquainted with several, any one of whose heads I should have no objection to carry on my shoulders, whom it would be impossible to induce to join in a party to be composed of that number.

H.—Of all superstitions, that is, perhaps, the most absurd—the most directly contrary to reason and experience. It is contrary to experience, because we know that in no country in the world is the average mortality so great as to carry off one-thirteenth of the population annually—of course, I speak of the native population only, strangers being exposed to the accidents of climate ; and it is contrary to reason, because, if the number were increased to fourteen, or more, the probability of the death of some one of them would be increased in proportion.

B.—It is not by reason and experience that the slaves to this superstition attempt to defend it. They will refer you to the Last Supper, at which thirteen were present.

H.—That, no doubt, was the origin of it ; yet, I believe that very few of your Thirteen-

arians are aware of, or, indeed, ever inquired about its origin.

K.—I assure you that, till this moment, I was ignorant of it myself.

S.—You said that as angrily, *K.*—, as if you thought we should presume to dispute your ignorance on any subject.

N.—There is another superstition still prevalent, and more so in Catholic countries than elsewhere: I mean the foolish opinion that Friday is an unlucky day—that an undertaking, for instance, commenced on a Friday, will fail.

K.—That accounts, then, for the failure of the Xlpacqlhuacquilpac Mexican Mining Association, in which, with a view to the moderate profit of fifteen hundred *per cent.* I embarked five hundred pounds: the subscription was opened on a Friday.

N.—Hold by that; I'll answer for it your Directors never gave you a more satisfactory account of the matter.

K.—And, just now, I recollect two other unlucky events, both of which occurred to me on Fridays. Once, I lost my purse with nineteen sovereigns in it.

S.—That goes to prove Friday to be a *lucky* day.

K.—The deuce it does !

S.—To the *finder*. But what was the other unlucky event ?

K.—I was never but once in my life plaintiff in an action : it was tried on a Friday, and I lost it.

N.—But what would the defendant say to that ? I suppose *he gained it* ?

K.—Why—it did so happen, certainly.

N.—The reason why, in Christian countries, Friday stands “aye accursed in the calendar,” is sufficiently obvious. Yet why should that be the case, when, at the same time, it is considered that, on that day (by an event to which I shall do no more than allude) the redemption of the human race was achieved ! Yet is this calumniated day not without its partisans, and some amongst them of illustrious name. Sixtus the Fifth—a Pope, mark ye !—considered it a fortunate day ; for it was on Fridays he was made a Cardinal, elected Pope, and crowned. Francis the First declared, that whatever he undertook on a Friday succeeded : and Henry the Fourth (of France) preferred that day before all others, because—it is rather a lover’s *because* than a philosopher’s, I grant—because it was on a Friday he first beheld the Marquise

de Verneuil, the mistress he loved more than any other,—*except* the fair Gabrielle !

H..—There is something beautiful in the superstitious reverence which the Persians entertain for their Wednesday. *That* is with them a white or fortunate day. There is a dash of poetry in its origin, which excuses—I had almost said ennobles—the superstition: it was on Wednesday that *Light was created*.

R..—I once saw General Z——dy, a man of undoubted bravery—he was a Neapolitan in the French service—turn pale at upsetting a salt-cellar. In vain did we endeavour to reason or to laugh him out of his alarm. “ I entertain only two superstitions,” said he; but those are deeply rooted in my mind. Breaking a glass or upsetting a salt-cellar is the sure prognostic of some grave misfortune to me. You may laugh; but I could relate many instances in proof of what I assert. I will trouble you with only one—but that is no trifle. When we were at Vienna, a fellow in my regiment (I was but a Colonel at that time) got possession of a cut-glass tumbler, the most exquisite thing of the kind I had ever seen. I bought it of him, intending it as a present to my wife. It went, in my baggage,

through many a hard campaign ; and, though many other articles of greater value were either lost or broken, I at length got that safely home. I felt, as I gave it to my wife, that, if ever she should break it, some serious calamity would befall me ; and I told her so. Many months passed away. I had the command of a division, and fixed my head-quarters at——” [I forgot the name of the place he mentioned—it was on the coast of Italy]—“ One morning, on coming down to breakfast, Madame Z—— told me she had broken the Vienna glass. I expressed myself more angrily to her than ever I had done before, and reminded her of the caution with which I had accompanied my present. Scarcely had I spoken, when an aid-de-camp came with intelligence that an English frigate was in the offing. I ordered my staff to be summoned, and went out with them to reconnoitre. The vessel was within range of our guns, and I ordered the batteries to be manned, in case she should attempt a landing. It was soon clear, however, that she had no such intention ; but, as she made away, she fired one shot—it was a wanton and a useless act, unless it were intended as a hint that her passing visit was not a friendly one—that one shot

carried away my leg, whilst not another person was hit by it. You see—! within an hour after the breaking of that glass, was I stretched on my bed with my leg off!"

N.—And what then? Say the most of it, it was but an odd coincidence.

R.—It is as such, only, I give you the anecdote; I am no defender of the General's creed.

N.—The spread of education, should it operate no greater benefit, will render the lower classes happier in themselves, and more useful to the community, by clearing their minds of the foolish, and, in some respects, the dangerous superstitions infused into them by their grandmothers.

K.—I should not be surprised if it were to supersede the necessity for grandmothers into the bargain.

THE OPERA, AND FEMALE COSTUME.

N.—How do you like the new Ballet,
K.—?

K.—I have not seen it.

N.—Why, surely, I saw you at the Opera, on Saturday, occupying one of the best places in the pit, during the whole time of its performance.

K.—But I saw nothing of the Ballet, for a short lady sat before me. On the top of her head there was a huge pile of hair, and on the top of her hair there was a huge pile of flowers, and on the top of her flowers there was a huge comb! Now, as, unluckily, I was unprovided with any sort of instrument used for determining the altitude of mountains, I could not exactly compute the elevation of these Cordilleras of the toilet; but, by dint of climbing with my eye from range to range, I should pronounce the *apex* of this monstrous structure to have been about twenty-six inches above the level of her shoulders; or, in other terms, nearly half the height of her entire figure. To say, literally, that I saw *nothing*, would be untrue; for, the comb being pierced full of holes, like the pan of a fire-shovel, (which, in shape, it somewhat resembled,) I could, now and then, catch glimpses of little bits of what, taken altogether, must, I conceive, have been Perrot or Taglioni; for, whenever those fragments passed before the gilt-brass grating, (as they did, frequently and rapidly,) I heard shouts of “Bravo!” and a loud clapping of hands.

N.—What a pity it is that our fair country-women should be at so much pains to undo

what Nature has done for them. They seem not to consider that the preposterous mode of head-dress, of which K—— has given no very exaggerated description, throws not only the features, but the entire figure out of proportion. Where there is no symmetry there can be no grace, and grace being essential to beauty——

K.—In a word, they make positive frights of themselves.

N.—'Tis well there are no ladies present, for the expression is not of the most civil; but, certainly, we may say that this Pelion-on-Ossa fashion is of no assistance to their natural attractions.

R.—You surely would not object to the introduction of *flowers* as an ornament to female head-dress?

N.—By no means; for, when judiciously selected,—I mean, chiefly with respect to colour, so that they may harmonize with the complexion, and the colour of the hair,—I say, when judiciously selected and tastefully arranged, nothing can be more ornamental. But to see a lady with a flower-garden on her head——!

S.—If a woman have received from Nature a beautiful head of hair, she need desire no

other ornament, nor can she invent any better.

B.—I suspect N—— has been attending a course of man-millinery. Will he tell us who is his Professor?

N.—No one of your acquaintance,—Taste. But if, as it would appear, you are of opinion that female dress is a subject too trivial for men's discussion, I cannot agree with you. Women don't take pains in their dress simply to please each other: independently of more powerful motives, they know that, on that subject, men are your only critics. Remember, too, that no less a man than Addison,—not to mention many other eminent names,—thought it not beneath his dignity to criticise the female fashions of his day; and, were a censorship of the kind established now, I really think an improvement in some of those of our own might result from it. To say nothing of the extraordinary ugliness of the mode K—— has complained of, (which, after all, may be a point depending on particular opinion,) it deserves to be reprehended on the ground of its extraordinary impropriety.

H.—Extraordinary *impropriety*! Is not the phrase too severe for the occasion?

N.—I think not, when one considers the inconvenience and disappointment it occasions to so many. Then, again, the enormous bonnets and caps,—*Parascenas*, as they have, not inaptly, been called,—worn by ladies at places of public amusement! Will you complain of the expression, as being too severe, H——, if I say that the practice is, at least, *inconsiderate*? O that Addison were alive to address to our good countrywomen one paper on the subject,—only one! First of all, in a vein of what quiet, yet forcible humour, would he expose to them the unseemliness of their dress!—denouncing it for its own intrinsic ugliness, as well as for its insidious detraction from the native loveliness of the wearer. Then, gradually rising in his theme, how seriously, yet with what urbanity!—in that tone of mingled power and gentleness so peculiarly his own,—would he remonstrate with them against persisting in what *he* would consider an unkindness, at the least, if even he did not deal with it as one of the moral offences, of the lesser order, against society. Yes; himself a fond frequenter of places of elegant recreation, as we know him to have been, I am well persuaded that, in a case of this nature, he would assume the

severer strain, and ask his fair readers upon what grounds they could justify their carrying about with them a screen so contrived as absolutely to intercept the view of all those who might be in its immediate neighbourhood, and utterly to deprive them of their share in an amusement which they had taken some pains, and incurred some expense, to enjoy. I will conceive that the appeal, or remonstrance, should be published on Tuesday ; and, certain am I, (such is my reliance on the good sense, the fine taste, and the right, kind feeling of Englishwomen,) that, on the very next Opera-night, not one amongst them would be seen with a covering on her head larger than the bell of a cowslip.

R.—A nuisance of a similar kind—

K.—Have a care you are not called to order by *N*— for using an uncivil expression.

R.—It is not so : I use it in its *legal* sense ; and, so taken, it is the most gentle of all imaginable expressions : meaning no more than something that *incommodes the neighbourhood*. To characterize the subject of your own complaint as something that merely “ *incommodes*” the neighbourhood, appears to me a refinement in the choice of terms, in comparison with

which the most cautious of any employed by N—— must sink into coarse invective. I will repeat, therefore, that a nuisance of a similar kind existed, for a short time, a few years ago, in Paris. I myself was in the *Balcon* of the *Théâtre Français* one evening, seated behind a lady who wore an exceedingly large bonnet, yet much smaller than those now in use ; and I speak with strict regard to truth when I say that, for the greater part of the performance, I could see nothing but the extreme sides of the stage, and, what are technically called, the borders. The house was crowded ; so that I had no alternative but to content myself with seeing nothing of the actors where I was, or to stroll to the remotest end of the town, where I might have seen just as much of them.

H.—The French, the politest people on earth, bore this little inconvenience, no doubt, with edifying patience.

R.—*Tout au contraire.* A Frenchman loves a play, and has not the slightest idea of paying his money at a theatre for the sole pleasure of looking at a pretty *chapeau*, although it should be *fait comme un Ange*, when he might see a dozen, in any milliner's shop, any day in the

week, *gratis*. The course adopted to remedy the evil was simple and effectual. “*Madame, il m'est impossible de voir,*” addressed in a tone of paramount courtesy to the lady, and with a pathetic emphasis on the “*impossible*” calculated to touch the heart of the most obdurate, was the usual form of appeal; and it seldom failed of inducing *Madame* to defer to some more convenient occasion the exhibition of her *joli chapeau*. But if (as was not often the case,) *Madame* did not think it proper to attend to the hint—the words and the manner in which it was conveyed were so generally adopted, that I have no doubt they had been pre-concerted by the regular play-goers—the next appeal, but in a tone less pacific, was to any gentleman who might have the honour to be in her company: “*Monsieur, I supplicate you to explain to Madame that her bonnet absolutely prevents my seeing.*” (If a lady happened to be in company with the complainant, he would strengthen his application by making it in her behalf.) Now, as it did sometimes occur that gentlemen were not in a humour to request of *Madame* to do any thing in the remotest degree disagreeable to her—or, that they had their own private and potent

reasons for not interfering with her supreme will—it will not be wondered at that sundry duels were the consequence of these interferences. Large bonnets, however, were not much longer carried into places of public amusement; or, when they were, the amiable wearers removed them immediately on taking their places.

ANECDOTES OF DUELLING.

N.—Apropos of duelling. I hear that General F—rn—r is dead. He was the most celebrated, or, I ought to say, the most notorious, duellist in France, at a time, too, when duelling was most the rage. He had been a great favourite of Napoleon's. Having the command of a regiment, upon—I forget what occasion—he led it with such extraordinary bravery to the attack, yet, at the same time, conducted its movements with so total a want of skill and discretion, that, without attaining any good result, his men were nearly all cut to pieces, and he himself narrowly escaped with his life. As a reward for his gallantry, his Imperial master promoted him to the rank of General; but, to mark his sense of F—rn—r's total want of “the better part of valour,” he never after

entrusted him with a command. So fatal was his skill in duelling that, when I knew him in Paris, he was under an interdiction of the Police ever to fight again. The terms of one of the duels in which he had been engaged were that the parties should fire at eight paces, and that they should alternately advance two paces till the fire of one or both of them should take deadly effect. According to this arrangement, the last advance brought the muzzle of his pistol close to his adversary's breast—he had twice already wounded him slightly, and received one shot himself—he fired, and his adversary fell dead at his feet! This piece of butchery—for as such it must be stigmatised—having been perpetrated under sanction of the articles of the meeting, passed over without receiving any severe notice. No wonder he was an unhappy man. I met him one day at dinner. On that occasion he was boisterous in his mirth, without appearing to be gay. Suddenly he rose and left the room. Half an hour afterwards, we found him in a small *boudoir* at the farther end of the apartment, stretched on a sofa—wriggling, groaning, and gnashing his teeth—I thought of Richard in the tent-scene. I once heard him say—(I must give part of his

expression in his own words, for, terrible as they are, they are, at the same time, so simple that they would lose their force in translation)—“*J'ai le bras fatal!* if I fire at a mark, ten to one I miss it: I never miss a man.” His look and tone, as he uttered this, were as of one who should speak of an attendant Demon, from whose dominion he had no power of escape.

R.—I once was witness to an instance of apathy on the part of a father—your talking of duelling reminds me of it—which is, perhaps, without a parallel. Walking one day beyond the *Barrière de Clichy*, I saw several persons assembled at a little distance from the roadside. Two gentlemen had just taken their ground—you know that these affairs are not always conducted with the same privacy on the Continent as in England—and received their pistols from the hands of their seconds. They fired at the same instant. One of the combatants, a fine young man of about five-and-twenty, received his adversary's shot in his forehead. It pierced his brain. He sprang nearly his own height from the ground, and fell dead. He was immediately carried home to his father's house, which was at no great

distance from the spot, and I went along with the crowd. He was an only son, mind you, but (so it was said) a *mauvais sujet* of the last degree—indeed, the very quarrel which led to the duel had occurred in a gaming-house, of which he was a regular frequenter. The body, which I followed into the court-yard of his father's house, was placed on the stones; the father was sent for; a *scene* was naturally to be expected; and a scene to be remembered there was. The old gentleman came out; looked calmly upon the dead body of his son; deliberately took a pinch of snuff; tapped down the lid of his box; and, saying nothing in the world more than—*Enfin!*—walked in again.

S.—Père Sensible!

FRENCH POLITENESS, AND FRENCH GLORY.

N.—You spoke of the French, just now, as of the politest people on earth? Do you really think they deserve that distinction?

H.—No; I applied it as one that is generally, though, in my opinion, unadvisedly, conceded to them. The lower classes of the French are, beyond comparison, *better mannered* than the same classes of the English; and it might, perhaps, be admitted that their

lowest class is also more polite than our's; but —

N.—I don't clearly perceive a distinction between good manners and politeness.

H.—Why, I think it possible that good manners — which, as the term imports, are but a thing of manner, considered good by a sort of general convention — may exist independently of politeness, a quality which I take to have its source in good sense and kind feeling. I know that the terms are often indifferently used, though the qualities they imply are distinct: and I am of opinion that true politeness is a compound of all those qualities. It is seldom that an ill-natured man or a fool is a polite man — considering politeness in its highest sense: and, taken in that sense, I would say — and with particular reference to the superior classes — that our neighbours have no advantage over us, if even, indeed, they equal us in that respect. I will give you two instances which may serve to illustrate my notion: one of which I conceive to have been a failure in politeness by a lady who, according to the common acceptation of the term, was unquestionably a polite woman — the once-celebrated Madame Recamier; the other, a

trait of politeness of the highest order, in a man of the lowest class. Some years ago, I had the pleasure of handing the lady I have mentioned to her carriage, from an apartment four stories high—I need scarcely add that this occurred in Paris. On reaching the bottom of the stairs, she complained of the immoderate height of our friends' lodgings. I replied that, for my own part, I rejoiced in the circumstance; for that, *upon the present occasion*, my pleasure would have been considerably diminished had they lived on the first floor. (I am not telling you this as a brilliant thing; but you know a Frenchwoman is better pleased that you should talk nonsense to her than be silent.) She made a profound courtesy, held out her hand for me to kiss—Alas! for me! she was then older than when she visited England twenty years before—and said, “Now, really, that is *so gallant, so witty*—*a Frenchman might have said it.*”

K.—A compliment with which you might have been very well content. You must be ingenious, indeed, in the detection of an impoliteness, to discover it there.

H.—Her opinion of the superiority of her own countrymen to us poor English—or, to

put it more pointedly, of our inferiority to them—implied by the conclusion of what she intended to be complimentary, was calculated to give pain; and, inasmuch as it was so—though certainly not to the extent of breaking the heart of an Englishman with a moderate share of philosophy—I contend that the lady's reply was not polite. By the way, equivocal compliments of this nature, from Frenchmen to foreigners, are not uncommon; and I think their frequency may be ascribed to that uncontrollable vanity, between which, and a good-natured desire to be civil, there is a constant struggle.

K.—But what was that *trait* of true politeness in a fellow of the lowest class?

H.—I accompanied two ladies to the *Champs Elysées*, to see the sports upon the occasion of the *Fête St. Louis*. From various booths, they were distributing, as is customary, bread, sausages, and wine, to the populace. A *Charbonnier*—one of the lowest of the low—who had been unsuccessful in getting his little barrel filled at one of the booths, was hastening to another. His clothes were begrimed; and from head to foot was he discoloured by the wine which had been spilt over him. He

looked like the Red Demon in *Der Freyschütz*. As his path lay immediately in the direction where we were standing, and I had a lady on each arm, it was impossible for him to pass on either side, without leaving on the dress of one of them a disagreeable recollection of his transit. Now, I have no hesitation in saying, that not an individual of the whole body of English coalheavers—for whom I entertain, in all other respects, profound veneration—but would have made his way, (especially if it had led to a pot of porter,) without consideration of consequences to silk or muslin: nor am I quite certain but that he would have derived a savage pleasure from the mischief he might have committed. Not so *Monsieur le Charbonnier*. On approaching us he stopped; and, gently touching my elbow with the tip of a finger, at the same time taking off his hat and making a bow to the ladies, he said—“*Pardon, Monsieur; c'est pour ne pas salir ces dames.*” We drew aside, in order that he might pass. He took the opportunity as gingerly as possible; and, honouring us with another bow, and a “*Merci, Monsieur et Mesdames,*” away he scampered. Now I think it may safely be said, that the finest courtier in

Europe — though his bow might have been more graceful, and his manner altogether more refined — could not have done the thing in better taste or with better feeling. It was a specimen of the truest politeness — the politeness of the heart.

N.—It was on a similar occasion I once witnessed a specimen of the French love of glory—the pure, unadulterated love of it for its own sake. After numerous aspirants had, with infinite labour, succeeded in climbing up a high pole (well greased to increase the difficulty of the exploit), and had dismantled it of all the prizes — hats, watches, and so forth, suspended at the top—a little ragged boy made the attempt. Several times did he fail; but, at length, by dint of laborious perseverance, he succeeded in gaining — all, indeed, that remained for him to gain—the bare point of the pole. Having achieved this, he redescended, amidst the acclamations of the mob. As he strutted by me, I said to him, “Pray, now, what have you gained by all this labour?” He made a sudden stop, eyed me with a look of astonishment, and, drawing up his trousers, striking his hat firmly down upon his head, and sticking his arms a-kimbo, exclaimed, in

a tone which Talma might have envied —
“*Comment, Monsieur ! et la gloire ?*”

R.—Talma used to instance this line of Corneille—I forget in which of his tragedies it occurs—as the finest in the whole body of French verse: it certainly is full, compact, and (referring to the exact point of time between the overthrow of an ancient dynasty and the erection of a new one) marvellously grand :

“ Un grand destin s’achève, un grand destin commence ! ”

The force of the line is, I think, in the comprehensive grandeur of the word *destin*, which, as there used, is inadequately, if at all, rendered by the English, *destiny* or *fate*.

H.—How completely a fine poetical thought may be destroyed by the alteration of a single word. I recollect a ludicrous instance of this. I was quoting to M—d—y, who is rather deaf, a line of Campbell’s, as being, in my opinion, equal to any that ever was produced :

“ And Freedom shriek’d—as Kosciusko fell.”

“ I dare say you are right,” replied M—d—y ; “ but it does not quite please me : I must think of it.” And he repeated,

“ And Freedom *squeak’d*—as Kosciusko fell.”

F.—L—ml—y of the —th Dragoons, was, as you may remember, a great admirer of the

Hohenlinden of the same poet, and used frequently to recite it; but instead of

“ Wave, Munich! all thy banners wave!
And charge with all thy *chivalry*,”—

fancying, no doubt, that the poet, from ignorance of military terms, had committed a blunder—he used invariably to say,

“ And charge with all thy *cavalry*.”

K.—I once heard two whimsical blunders made in the course of a performance of Macbeth, at a poor little country theatre. The Lady Macbeth who, not unlikely, had been a laundress, instead of saying merely

“ A little water clears us of this deed,”

chose to “ make assurance doubly sure,” and said—“ A little soap-and-water.” And, presently after, for

“ We have scotch'd the snake, not killed it,—

the Thane, looking with an air of profound mystery at his tender mate, whispered her,

“ We have *catch'd* a snake and *killed* it !”

B.—I have seldom been more amused by blunders on the stage than by the *mis-representations*, at the French Theatres, of English manners. In a scene of serious interest, a Countess of Athol addresses her interlocutor as

"Tom ;" and, in another piece, they talk of the *county* of Ireland, and the heroine—a serious, *bonâ-fide* heroine—is addressed by her lover as "adorable Miss Polly." Indeed, Tom, Jack, Betty, and Polly, are almost the only names given to English characters, whether serious or comic—historical characters, of course, excepted.

R..—What say they of our blunders concerning them ? I don't think we have the laugh all on our own side.

B..—Certainly not ; for, at least, as often as I have laughed at their ignorance have I blushed for our own. I must say, though, that there was a time, and that but a few years ago, when many of their mis-representations of English character and manners, not only on their stage, but elsewhere, were wilful. To so pitiable an extent was this carried, that even a portrait of Mrs. Siddons, given as a frontispiece to a book of travels in England, was falsified. It was a head, professedly engraved after the picture of her, as the Tragic Muse, by Sir Joshua ; but a little simpering mouth, and a *pug nose* ! were substituted for those features which are so remarkably fine in the original. And this was exhibited, and commented on, as what

even the English themselves considered the perfection of a tragic countenance.

N..—O, that must have been the work of some obscure pamphleteer.

B..—No ; it was the work of a man who, at that time, enjoyed considerable celebrity ; and, it was as universally read, and as generally credited, as the work of his predecessor, of mendacious notoriety, General Pillet.

H..—I should be sorry to doubt that the French hold truth in the same veneration that we do ; but, certainly, to give the lie,—although it is not considered as in the highest degree complimentary,—is not the same deadly offence with them as it is with us. I have more than once been complimented on being found out in a truth, as if truth-telling were a rare accomplishment. “Really, you are not a liar!” said a French lady to me ; and, upon another occasion, I was honoured with the exclamation of “*C'est singulier ! toujours vous me dites la vérité !*”

N..—Well,—France, “with all thy faults I love thee still!” No man should travel from his cradle to his grave without paying thee a visit by the way : and with a disposition prone to enjoyment it lightens the journey amazingly.

The French are a kind people, and it must be his fault who cannot live happily with them. Pity it is, possessing, as they do, whatever can contribute to the felicity of a people in a state of peace, that war should be indispensable in order to render their idea of happiness complete. *La gloire* and *la guerre* form the eternal burden of their song ; as if the chief business of life were to destroy life. They would fight to-morrow with any nation on earth for no better an object than the chance of obtaining a victory. Laugh at me, if you please, for uttering what you may consider a foolish opinion, but I look upon it as a serious misfortune to them that the two words *Gloire* and *Victoire* rhyme together : they so constantly occur in that portion of their poetry which is the most popular, and the best calculated to excite them in a high degree,—their *vaudeville* songs,—that the two ideas they express have become identical in their minds ; and he will deserve well of his country who shall discover the means of making *glory* rhyme to *peace*.

K.—What will he deserve who shall discover the means of rendering, in English, the line of Corneille's you quoted !—by a single line, I

mean. I have been hammering at it this quarter of an hour without success.

H.—You will find it no easy task. Condensation is a difficult operation. Wasn't it Pascal who apologized to a correspondent for sending him a long letter, on the plea that he had not time to write him a shorter?

K.—In an epigram now,—brevity is indispensable there. For my part, I would not own an epigram that consisted of more than two lines.

H.—I think I can please you in *that* respect. Here is one on the application of the epithet *le Desiré* to Louis the Eighteenth:—

The object of each Frenchman's wish, you say :
'Tis true, for heartily he 's wish'd—away.

Again : on being shown the busts of Molière and Voltaire, with that of Charles-Dix between them :

These, men of wit ! why, all who 've seen 'em
Declare they 've not a grain *between* 'em.

Here's another—a parallel between General Pépé and Julius Cæsar:—the very pith of the General's despatches to Government conveying an account of his disgraceful retreat.

Cæsar came, saw, and conquer'd !—To the fray
I came, I saw, and then—I ran away.

One more—

K.—Stop him! stop him! I can beat you for brevity, if for nothing more. Epitaph on Old Parr, who died at the age of 160:

(*DEATH loquitur.*)

'Od rot him!

At last I've got him!

PREPOSTEROUS LONGEVITY.

N.—Parr was a mischievous old fellow: he has left behind him a pernicious example of longevity. At sixty-nine a man will look with complacency to the approaching termination of his career, as an event to be expected in the ordinary course of Nature. Once allow him to turn seventy, he has then escaped the fatal three-score-and-ten, and would consider himself an ill-used person should he receive notice of ejection a day short of ninety. Ninety comes and he grows insolent. Death, he thinks, has passed on and overlooked him. He asks why Nature so long has delayed to claim her debt. She has suffered thrice seven years to elapse beyond the period usually assigned for payment, and he indulges in wild fancies of a Statute of Limitations. In his most rational moments he talks of nothing but old Parr. He burns his will, marries his housemaid, lectors his son and heir who is seventy, and

canes his grand-child (a lad of fifty) for keeping late hours. I called on old S——g a morning or two ago. He is ninety-three. I found him reading his newspaper, and inveighing against the outcry for Reform and short Parliaments—declaring that, rather than be forced down into Cheshire to vote oftener than once in every six or seven years, he, for his part, would sell his franchise for a straw. 'Twas clear he had outlived the recollection of the probability of a visit from one who might deprive him of his franchise upon terms even less advantageous. I took occasion to compliment him upon his fine old age. His reply was an angry growl. "Ugh! do you want me gcne? I'm only ninety-three. Ugh! Mr. Parr wouldn't die till he was one-hundred-and-sixty!"

R..—Paying a visit to old P—ke, I found him walking up and down the drawing-room, stamping and raving, and holding a handkerchief to his mouth. I inquired what ailed him. To my astonishment he complained of *tooth-ache!*—a strange complaint, thought I, for a man of seventy-eight, whom one would hardly expect to find with a single implement of that kind in his head. But, in fact, he was in possession of the whole set, *except two*

His lamentation, which he continued at intervals, ran in this strain :—“ Seventy-eight—only seventy-eight, and two teeth gone already ! —lost one of them sixty years ago, and, as if that were not enough, four years ago I must lose a second—and now—ah ! I suppose I must part with another. And then my eyes ! one of my eyes is beginning to fail. Lord help me ! for, should it go on at this rate, I shall be in a sad condition before many more years are over my head !”

S..—The unconscionable old rogue ! At seventy-eight how many more could he expect ?

N..—Rely on it, I am right, and that Parr was to blame for this. At seventy, P—ke would have died with grateful thanksgivings on his lips for the blessings of his past life. As it was, had he been allowed to live on till he should have parted with the remainder of his teeth, at the rate of one a-year, he would have attempted, when it came to the last, to smuggle a false tooth or two into his jaws.

R..—I think I understand the gist of your complaint : the longer you allow folks to live, the more they won’t die. Fie upon them !

S..—I shudder at the contemplation of the consequences of Parr’s abominable example.

Well had it been for posterity if some one had killed the cent-sexagenarian at the outset of his wicked career.

K.—Horrible! that would have been *Parricide*!



NOTES FOR A MEMOIR.

IN A CONFIDENTIAL LETTER TO THE PUBLISHER OF
THE NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

MY DEAR SIR ;

YOUR letter of yesterday has taken me altogether by surprise ; and, by pressing, as you do, one of your two requests, you impose upon me a task the most difficult I was ever, perhaps, required to undertake. Since you have obtained the consent of my old friend Mr. Pickeringill to the publication of an engraving after his portrait of me, in your "Series of Living Literary Characters," in the New Monthly,* I certainly shall not withhold mine ; but I would have yielded it with less hesitation, had you delayed your request till a few months later.

* Commenced on the first of January, 1831, by a portrait and memoir of Sir Walter Scott. Alas ! since then, though brief the interval, that mighty Genius is taken from us !

It is not that I entertain the slightest objection to your obliging the Public with a notion of my “human face divine;” for some such memorandum is, I know, desired by a considerable portion of that august body, of every person who, in any way, is often, and has been long, before it—from kings, warriors, and statesmen, authors, artists, and actors, down to learned pigs and precocious children: but I wish you had not been “compelled by some misarrangement with the engravers,” to think of me so early in your new enterprise,—to place me *third* in your series!—and that circumstances had allowed you to give to a dozen or a score others their due precedence. I say this, not from apprehension that you may be charged with an intention of instituting a scale of rank or merit by the order in which you are giving your subjects: your taste and sagacity, in these matters, are sufficiently well known to protect you against any such inference: I say it out of pure concern for myself. Has it escaped your observation that you are placing me in somewhat a ludicrous point of view? You start with Sir Walter Scott; that is well done; Sir Walter is the present acknowledged head of British literature. Your next step is to the fair Author of the

"Sorrows of Rosalie," and the "Undying One;" well again ; that lady stands amongst the foremost in the female literary line. Now, with only one step intervening, from the Author of "Waverley" down you come to me ! I sincerely hope you may not be hurt by the fall. Why not follow the example of those enterprising travellers, who risk their necks ten times in climbing up Mont-Blanc, for no other purpose, than I could ever perceive, than to risk them twenty in coming down again ? Why not *slide* down Parnassus, (as *they* do when they come to a pleasant Alpine slope !) instead of taking a leap ? Had you done so, you would have found me, complacently waiting your arrival, very near the bottom.

" Small by degrees, and beautifully less !! "

And, now!—having given a few minutes' consideration to the matter—I suspect, Mr. Colburn, you are indulging a sly laugh at my expense, and that you do really intend to classify your subjects. I find, in your letter, something about *eminent* authors.

You cannot but be aware that, in literature, as in every thing else, there are two sorts of eminence : there is the eminently good, and the eminently bad. You have a *motive*, then, in placing

ine where you do:—you desire that I should take the leadership, or become the representative, of a class. Which ? I ask you, in which category am I to stand ? You place me, relatively to Sir Walter Scott (for, gallantry forbid ! that the station of the lady should be disputed), in the predicament in which Duretete stands towards Young Mirabel, in the play of the “Inconstant,” where there are two ladies to be disposed of between them : “ You shall have fair play,” says old Mirabel ; “ you shall both choose ; but my Bob shall choose first.” Thus, you give Sir Walter the choice of one of two places, and then allow me to *choose* the remaining *one* ! I say not this in anger ; for, so great is my respect for the extraordinary person I have named, that, whichever of the two stations he may have selected (and, doubtless, he has been guided in his choice by public opinion), I shall cheerfully accept the other. After this frank and sincere declaration on my part, I cannot expect that dissension will ever arise between us : I entertain not the remotest idea of invading his domain, nor do I think it likely he will ever trespass upon mine.

But the request which I feel some difficulty, as well as delicacy, in attempting to fulfil, is,

that I would "furnish you with some notes for the memoir which ought to accompany it" [the portrait.]

Now, I do not recollect that passage in the whole course of my life which (in my opinion) our friends, the public, would care a straw to be acquainted with ; and if I did, I doubt whether I would relate it, forasmuch as I conceive *self* to be an irksome subject. Several months ago, (when, in compliance with the urgent desire of my friend, Dick Ferret, that I would follow the fashion of Life-and-Times-writing, I promised to furnish you with a few "Sketches and Recollections,") I expressed my sentiments upon this very point ; and, as nothing has since occurred to alter them, I beg you will allow me to repeat them here.

"Of myself, individually, he (the reader) must expect to learn but little ; self is usually a tiresome subject ; and, unless one has passed an adventurous life, he seldom appears to advantage as the hero of his own tale. Indeed, the only true interesting auto-biography I am acquainted with is that of Baron Münchausen. All that he tells of himself is worth listening to. 'Tis a lie from beginning to end, I grant ; but it is (to use a fashionable phrase) a spirit-

stirring lie ; and I do pronounce it as my serious and settled opinion, that no man ought to be allowed to talk, or to write, about himself, who has not facts to relate of equal interest with the Baron's fictions. *I have not* : I shall therefore speak of myself as little, and as seldom, as circumstances will permit."

After this, what can you reasonably expect from me in the way of Notes for a Memoir ? Were it not, indeed, matter of historical record that the battle of Trafalgar was won by Lord Nelson ; were it not notorious that to Napoleon the world is indebted for the road across the Simplon ; or, were it not known to thousands of living witnesses that it was the Duke of Wellington who beat that sublime Mac-adamizer at Waterloo ; I might modestly *deny* myself into the reputation of having achieved some one, or all, of those glorious exploits.

Or, again ; had not Sir Walter Scott (unfortunately for me and for your Memoir) lately acknowledged the authorship of the Waverley Novels, how easy would it have been for me to *disclaim* the honour of having written them —but, to disclaim it in such a manner as to excite a belief that it was to me alone it legitimately belonged. More than once have

I seen such a manœuvre successfully performed.

At the time of the publication of "The Bridal of Triermain," a person, very well known, called upon me with that poem in his hand. "When you have read this," said he, "let me hear your candid opinion of it—I request it, now, as a friend—but you must not ask me who is the author—I have reasons for keeping that a secret :" and, as he said this, he pursed up his mouth into a mock-modesty smile. On reading the work, I recognised certain passages which he had shown me some time before, in his own hand-writing, on the envelope of a letter. (He was in the habit of receiving proofs of most of the Scotch publications from an Edinburgh printer.) When next we met, therefore, (after telling him what I thought of the poem) I said, without hesitation, "It is your's, T—— ; do you forget your having shown me some of the lines in manuscript ?" To this (drawing in his breath, affecting a smile expressive of mingled satisfaction and confusion, and accompanying every two or three words with a significant shake of the head) he replied : " You—be hang'd—you rogue ;—I sha'n't—tell you—whose it is ;—so just—drop—the sub-

ject." He performed this same experiment on many others of his acquaintances ; and, for some time, enjoyed a very respectable poetical reputation on the mere strength of *disclaiming* the authorship of one of Scott's popular works.

Seriously speaking, my dear Sir, I don't like this task. Would I were dead ! you might then dispose of me, "after what flourish your nature will," in that pleasant corner of your Magazine, the **BIOGRAPHICAL PARTICULARS OF CELEBRATED PERSONS, LATELY DECEASED.** There I might quietly remain till the eager public should call for the publication of my "Memoirs and Correspondence," or my "Journal and Letters," or my "Secret History," or "Piquant Anecdotes of the late ——;" and, for such a work as the latter, I could, peradventure, furnish you with materials which would raise a laugh—albeit, in some instances, it might be fearfully against me. But to supply you with "Notes," to be thrown into the form of a Memoir by some one who could not, in decency, turn the very weapons with which I had furnished him against me ; whilst any thing he should say in my praise—(and the circumstances in which he found himself placed would oblige him, *malgré* his own opinion, to be

civil,)—might, by those not well acquainted with me, be attributed to my own pen—— !
Mr. Colburn, I will not do it.

* * * * *

And, yet, shall I, who for the last twenty years have stood before the public as a contributor—though an humble one—to its amusements, and have never, in the whole course of that time, *shuffled* into print a paragraph (*a puff* is, in such a case, the fitting term,) in my own praise, nor a line in disparagement of another ;—who have never once attempted to suborn the commendation of a critic, nor have used means, direct or indirect, to deprecate his censure (and I fearlessly challenge the whole body of the respectable London Press to impeach, by one single instance, the rigid truth of this assertion)—shall I quail under the apprehension of what might be said were I to furnish you with the list of a few farces (for that is all that you can seriously mean by Notes for a Memoir of *Me*)— ? Mr. Colburn, you shall have it. And I am glad at enjoying so good an opportunity as I am thus afforded of making this point-blank declaration ; the more so as I have some reason for thinking that a belief exists, in certain quarters, (where, so far,

at least, as *I* am concerned, I would rather it did not,) that it is sometimes the practice to ply the double trade of author and critic.

So now to business—but, *sub rosa*,—for, being fairly embarked in it,

“By the rood! Master Tony, we ’ll not be foiled for lack of our own good report.”

Notes (PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL,) for a Memoir.

The first essential point in a biography is one’s age; but what mine may be is a piece of information which I shall take the liberty to refuse you. I have just now said something referring to twenty years ago—that was *entre nous*—please let the compiler of the Memoir say *ten*. Since I *must* figure in the New Monthly, I desire to be placed in as interesting an attitude as possible: you will, therefore, have the goodness to let me be born in the year 1802. A prisoner on trial is humanely warned against saying any thing by which he might criminate himself: why should I make a disclosure by which, haply, I might spoil my fortune? I am unmarried; and it is my intention, should I meet with a lady possessing youth, beauty, virtue, accomplishments, fortune, &c. &c.—[Let this passage be care-

fully worked out—I presume the Stamp-Office will charge the Advertisement-duty for it—*N'importe.*]

On reflection—will 1802 make me young enough? I leave this point to the decision of your better judgment. But be sure you don't bring me into the world later than 1805—let me see—

From 1831

Take 1805

There remains 26—a very pretty age; but, remember! not later; for my published pieces are *dated*, and we might be *found out*.

I can supply you with no information concerning the first few months of my human existence.

The period of infancy is, usually, one of oblivion; but it may be assumed that it was, in my case, as it is with most other gentlemen at that tender age, a pleasing round of measles, pap, hooping-cough, and squalling. I never heard that my entry into the world was announced by any great convulsion of Nature (the omission of which, considering the importance of the event, I have sometimes thought to have been an incivility;) yet it might not be amiss—for the sake of effect—to couple it

with a total eclipse! or, what think you of a slight touch of an earthquake? *I* incline to the latter—but please yourself.

Make me a heavy boy at school: dull children generally turn out clever—besides, again—*effect*. Say, too, that I was by no means a *handsome* child—you may remember the common notion upon that point. Let those passages run something in this way:—

“We have heard, from those who enjoyed the most favourable opportunities of watching the progress of his youthful mind, that it would have been difficult for the most acute observer to detect in him the slightest promise of that &c. &c. which, in after years, was to astonish, and delight, and captivate”—and so forth. [“Shed lustre” and “blazed forth” are good phrases, and very common on these occasions; they might be introduced.]

Then again: “Neither as a child, nor, indeed, as a youth, was he remarkable for personal beauty; but, as he ripened in years, &c. &c.—till, at length”—and so on; taking care to close the sentence with a note of admiration! For the reason stated, when alluding to my age, I must impress upon you the necessity for extreme delicacy in the handling of

this last passage. In describing my personal appearance, as a boy, I don't wish that, *for the sake of effect*, you should make me out an absolute Kangaroo or an Ourang-Outang—don't exaggerate *there*; but, when touching upon the *present* state of the case, I have only to say (in the emphatic words of a certain Secret Despatch) "Go it, Ned!"

On second thoughts, it would be safer that I should write this myself; so, if I can save the post this evening, I will send you the passage, ready cut and dried—but, remember, *private and confidential*.

And now you may come, at once, to a period of my life, which, with but an ordinary portion of management, may be rendered truly interesting.

At fourteen—don't let the case be insisted on as an uncommon one—at fourteen, I met with a dreadful fall—I fell in love; and, in addition to this accident, composed sundry quires of tender verses.

At fifteen, a similar calamity befel me.

At sixteen, *Ditto*.

At seventeen, *Ditto*.

At ——— Ah! me! And yet this calamitous period is usually the happiest of one's life.

Ought not a few love-letters to be introduced somewhere about this place ? The deuce of it is I have not a scrap of one remaining. Could you, or any of your friends, lend me half-a-dozen ? Love-epistles are usually as much alike as if they were all made to a pattern. It would only be altering the signature and address, and any one would serve our purpose. Or, were it not that time presses, I could make a few.

At all events, there *must* be a paragraph commencing thus :—

“ But the state of his feelings at this particular juncture may be best described in his own words. In a letter dated * * * and addressed to * * * we find him thus expressing himself * * * *.”

Besides, a few asterisks are invaluable : they may mean any thing, every thing, or nothing.

Would it not be proper also,—not exactly here, but somewhat later ; though I mention it now lest I should forget it—would it not be proper to have an *Epoch* ? that is to say, a period at which a total revolution ought to take place in my sentiments, feelings, &c. and the whole future current of my life be influenced by some unforeseen or extraordinary event ? For example :—

" But a circumstance was now about to occur which was destined, deeply and seriously, to affect the whole of his future existence ; which was either to gild with its rainbow hues the waves of the ocean of life now broadly spread before him, or to envelop them in the gloom of its shadow. Whether it fluttered above his head on the gay and glittering wing of the butterfly, or expanded the dark pinion of the raven, the following pages will declare. It happened on the evening of the 31st of December, 1814, that ——"

Yet, perhaps, such a formula would hardly be admissible in a memoir of one whose *career* is not yet terminated ; therefore, *although I could append a true story to it*, you had better reserve it till I have the honour of figuring in the "pleasant corner" of the New Monthly to which I have once already alluded.

Be a little mysterious, now and then. Give me some deep-rooted sorrow, the source of which I have never disclosed even to my most intimate friends ; and, by all means, infuse "a tincture of melancholy into a spirit naturally &c. &c." As you will, doubtless, place these Notes in the hands of some practised Biographer, he will perfectly well understand what

I mean. For the reason I have already given you, there will be no harm in begetting a “tender interest.”

Would you desire to have a specimen or two of my juvenile productions ?

It is true that I had just good sense enough to burn them all many years ago, nor, do I think, I could recollect a line of any one of them. I commenced my career, like most other “youthful geniuses,” by being woefully tender and elegiac ; but I very soon perceived that, of all things, serious Poetry was not my vocation. Yet, it is not improbable that some of mine were about equal to the common run of boy-verses, and might, in the good days of the Hayleys and the Pratts, have made a tolerable figure in the Town and Country Magazine —for the art of middling-verse-making is but a mere knack, and an easy one. But to talk of tolerable verses is almost a contradiction in terms ; and the great names, which have arisen since about the commencement of the present century, have indisposed the Public to endure any thing in poetry short of excellence, or that does not, at least, nearly approach to it.

Yet (as I have said) would you like a specimen ? for, although I cannot remember one, I

can make something to answer the purpose. Pray let me know this by return; and, at the same time, tell me whether you will have a copy of verses of which it shall be said, "We take, at random, from amongst a vast mass of his unpublished poems, the following, by which it will be seen that even at *that* early age"—and so forth; or, would you prefer it the other way? as thus: "We have selected the following as the best of a great number; and, certainly, his warmest admirers will admit that it gives no promise of that excellence which so shortly afterwards, &c. &c." I should prefer the latter, on account of the contrast—the surprise. Effect, effect; I am always for effect.

Bless me! a material point had nearly escaped me! What accomplishments do you wish I should possess?

"Sings, plays, and dances well" (as Othello has it) will come as mere matters of course. With respect to the first of these endowments, please to let me have but very little voice, but, at the same time, have the kindness to make me sing "with infinite expression." I am sure you will agree with me in the propriety of attributing to me the latter quality—for a

reason I have more than once insisted on. I am aware of the consequences of such an announcement:—"Pray do favour us—we know." I must be hoarse for the remainder of my life.

N.B. Let as little as possible be said about my equestrian attainments. They have already been noticed in "A Cockney's Rural Sports,"* and we ought, as much as possible, to avoid contradictions. You may, however, just say, "He sits a horse with firmness, ease, and grace ;" and so, indeed, I do—till he begins to move.

Shall I swim ?

If I do, mightn't I as well leap from the head of Ramsgate Pier—at high water—in a storm—and rescue a female, "young, beautiful, and interesting,"* from the yawning deep ? Think

* *Vide* page 138 of this volume.

* These characteristics are indispensable. *Vide* Newspapers. One never reads an account of a female in a situation of distress, disgrace, or danger, but, by some unaccountable fatality, she happens to be young, beautiful, and interesting ! If this statement be correct, the tread-mill must be the very Temple of Loveliness ! Poor, persecuted race ! No ugly woman was ever convicted of purloining a watch ; no dumpy, dowdy, plain-looking body was ever edified by the virtuous admonition of a police magistrate ; no old woman was "ever snatched from the flames," or "rescued from a watery grave :" it is still the

of this. Should you decide in the affirmative, be careful *that no date be given*; and, pray, let some other phrase be substituted for “yawning deep :” not but it is a very good one; but, like “devouring element,” “vital spark,” “launched into eternity,” and some others, it is worn to death by the newspapers.

I don’t recollect any other points, of a like nature, upon which it is necessary to furnish you with hints—(for Prudence’ sake ! destroy this letter the moment you have extracted all that you may think needful to your purpose)—so, at once, to a list of what you are pleased to dignify with the denomination of my “dramatic labours.”

Let as little as possible be said about “Hamlet Travestie,” and *sink the date*—dating books is a silly practice: why don’t you abolish it?—Between ourselves, it was published in 1810; but, lest that fact should be discovered, insinuate that “the author was a mere child at the time.”

This was the first time I ever saw myself in print; and, never shall I forget the proud satis-
young, the beautiful, the interesting! Can there be a special Providence for the protection of the Old and the Ugly? I wish you would ask some one of your scientific friends for an explanation of this phenomenon.

faction with which I walked from one bookseller's window to another's, for the pleasure of looking at my own book ! I never till then entertained due reverence for the memory of Caxton ; and, had a monument been to be erected in his honour, I would willingly have subscribed the whole profits of the publication towards so laudable an undertaking. To the temporary success of this foolery I may attribute all my subsequent attempts at dramatic composition, since it procured for me an invitation to write for the Theatre.

Amongst the important events of the year 1815, there are two which deserve especial notice : the pacification of Europe was accomplished, and the first farce I ever wrote was produced at Drury-Lane Theatre. This was "Who's Who ?" which (although written long before) had been preceded on the stage by "Intrigue," and another thing, the title of which need not be recorded. Of the latter, I shall only say that its merits were not sufficient to secure for it an honest d—nation : after a few nights it died of its own accord. Together with another or two I could name, it is destined to enjoy an immortality of oblivion : let us not profanely disturb their repose.

As a useful hint to aspiring dramatists, it may be mentioned that "Who's Who," as originally written, consisted of *ninety pages!* Its unconscionable length drew from the theatrical copyist, who was doomed to the labour of transcribing it, this pathetic appeal :—

"Oh ! Sir ! your two-act farce is as long as the 'School for Scandal.' If you could but *cut, before-hand,* and spare me a little trouble !"

I willingly admitted its similarity, in point of length, with that admirable play ; but, entertaining, perhaps, a private opinion of their equality of merit, I refused to cut a line. To this necessity, however, I was in the end reduced : more than *half* the dialogue was expunged : and, if you are acquainted with what was allowed to remain, you may form a tolerably fair estimate of the value of the portion suppressed. That great artist, MUNDEN—I take pleasure in writing his name—played the principal character (Sam Dabbs;) and, having said that MUNDEN acted it, I have said *how* it was acted.

I will here mention a piece of advice I received from that unrivalled actor, John Kemble Upon more than one occasion have I proved

its value ; and, well considered, it may be useful to others who would place their happiness upon the unsteady foundation of critics' praise.

On the morning following the first performance of my new piece, I was in a bookseller's shop, reading the newspaper-reports of it. Whilst thus engaged, Mr. Kemble entered ; and, no doubt, perceiving that I was elated by the favourable notices of my work, he gently drew the paper from my hand, and, patting me on the arm, said :—

“ I am sorry to see you so much delighted with a little newspaper approbation ; for, if you continue to write, a reverse must come, some time or other, and then their censure will make you equally unhappy. Now mind what I say to you : don't despise good criticism (and that generally comes in a friendly way ;) but, above all, read hard ; study the good sterling dramatists ; and, when once you have made up your mind as to your course, work it out in your own way, to the best of your ability. That has been my practice in my own profession. Ah ! if I had paid much attention to what newspapers might say of me, I should often have been a very miserable man.”

But I find my epistle running to a greater length than I intended it should; so (as briefly as possible) to a conclusion.

Besides those I have mentioned, you will find me answerable for about five-and-twenty pieces, acted with various degrees of success—*and failure*. (Let nothing be said about the latter.) Among them may be mentioned—“A Short Reign and a Merry One;” “The Two Pages of Frederick the Great,” (these are but little more than translations from the French.)—By the by, I will mention to you an interesting fact connected with the latter. It was acted in Paris, for the first time, in (I think) 1784. There is a very trifling part in it of an English waiter, a part consisting of about half-a-dozen lines. Who would you think acted it?—TALMA; who was then patiently *studying* and *working his way* towards the eminence he afterwards attained.—The “Scape-goat,” a farce; and “The Wife’s Stratagem,” a comedy, altered from Shirley. These were produced at Covent-Garden.

At the Haymarket: “Match-Making;” “Married and Single;” “Tribulation;” “Paul Pry;” (Comedies.) “Twould Puzzle a Conjuror;” “Twixt the Cup and the Lip;”

“Gudgeons and Sharks,”* and “Lodgings for Single Gentlemen,” &c. (Farces.)

At Drury-Lane (in addition to those above-mentioned,) “Simpson and Co.” and “The Wealthy Widow,” (Comedies.) “Past and Present,” a drama, and “Deaf as a Post,” “My Wife! What Wife?” and “Turning the Tables,”† (Farces.)—After this astounding display,

“I pr'ythee give me leave to breathe awhile.”

* * * * *

You ask me for “a note or two respecting the origin of the Comedy of ‘Paul Pry.’” It has ever appeared to me that the only allowable occasion for an Author to speak of his own productions is in a preface, or advertisement, to his works, *when printed*; but, since—This reminds me of a story.

In a small Dutch town, the inhabitants of which were not remarkable for wisdom, it happened, once upon a time, that they caught a deserter. It was late at night—the event

* I find appended to this piece a note in my own handwriting, which, as a specimen of brevity, united with extraordinary clearness and precision, I shall take leave to quote: “*Unequivocally damned and withdrawn.*”

† Since those, three have been produced, at Covent-Garden, “A Nabob for an hour,” a farce; and, at Drury-Lane, “A Soldier’s Courtship,” and “Patrician and Parvenu,” comedies.

was unexpected and uncommon—it was one of paramount importance—unfortunately, the chief authority of the place was absent,—one false step in the proceedings might involve the well-being of Holland!—what course were they to adopt? At length, it was determined that the Notables of the place should be assembled. After sitting in deliberation throughout the greater part of the night, they resolved that, till the return of the Burgomaster, who alone was competent to deal with him, the deserter should be put into prison. Pity it was that a decree so wise, the result of such long and anxious debate, should have been rendered abortive, and the assembly thrown into fresh perplexity, by a circumstance so trivial as altogether to have escaped their consideration——there was no such thing as a prison in the town!

Now, according to my own theory, the information you desire ought to appear nowhere but in a preface to the printed work; but, since the piece in question (as well as some others in the marvellous list I have given you) has not been, nor is it likely to be, printed—since, in short, we have no prison in the town——what are we to do? I will not pretend to

be ignorant of your intention. These "Notes" will be handed over, along with the others, to the Compiler of the Memoir, with instructions to speak of me as "unquestionably the first dramatist of the Age." Well, let him; I am to be the hero of the New Monthly for all March;* a month's pre-eminence is soon over; my reign will terminate on the *First of April!* What a consummation! However, while it lasts let me enjoy it: so, if you sincerely desire that I should hold the station for even one little hour of that little month, let not the slightest allusion be made to Colman, or Morton, or Kenney. Pray insist strongly upon this point, or I won't answer for the consequences. They are my *Masters*, Mr. Colburn: and, though this is a fact well known to all the town, perhaps nobody is so thoroughly convinced of it as I am. If you would truly judge of a man's strength, try a fall with him.

And now for the "Notes."

The idea of the character of Paul Pry was suggested by the following anecdote, related to me several years ago, by a beloved friend.

An idle old lady, living in a narrow street, had passed so much of her time in watching

* This Paper first appeared in the Number for March of the New Monthly.

the affairs of her neighbours, that she, at length, acquired the power of distinguishing the sound of every knocker within hearing. It happened that she fell ill, and was, for several days, confined to her bed. Unable to observe, in person, what was going on without, as a substitute for the performance of that duty, she stationed her maid at the window. But Betty soon grew weary of the occupation: she became careless in her reports — impatient and tetchy when reprimanded for her negligence.

“Betty, what *are* you thinking about! do n’t you hear a double knock at No. 9? Who is it?”

“The first-floor lodger, Ma’am.”

“Betty! — Betty! — I declare I must give you warning. Why do n’t you tell me what that knock is at No. 54!”

“Why, Lord! Ma’am, it is only the baker, with pies.”

“*Pies*, Betty! what *can* they want with pies at 54? they had pies yesterday!”

Of this very point I have availed myself.

Let me add that Paul Pry was never intended as *the representative of any one individual*, but of a class. Like the melancholy of Jaques, he is “compounded of many *Simples*;” and I could mention five or six who were unconscious contributors to the character. That it

should have been so often, though erroneously, supposed to have been drawn after some particular person, is, perhaps, complimentary to the general truth of the delineation.

With respect to the play, generally, I may say that it is original: it is original in structure, plot, character, and dialogue—such as they are. The only imitation I am aware of is to be found in part of the business in which Mrs. Subtle is engaged:—whilst writing those scenes I had strongly in my recollection *Le Vieux Celibataire*. But even the little I have adopted is considerably altered and modified by the necessity of adapting it to the exigencies of a different plot.

It is not for me (even in this confidential letter) to say to what causes I attribute the popularity of the play; but one of them unquestionably is that it contains a character of which almost every person who has seen it imagines he knows the prototype. Its success, on its first production, was *greatly assisted* by the admirable manner in which its principal parts were played, by Mrs. Glover, Madame Vestris, Mr. Liston, Mr. Farren, and that stanch disciple of the good old school, Mr. Pope.*

It is time I should conclude.

* Now no more.

And now, seriously, very seriously—if you are resolved to praise me, I would rather it should be, not for what I have done, but for what I have abstained from doing. I have never, in any of the trifles I have produced, sought for assistance from scenery, dresses, decorations, or music, or any other adventitious aid. My attempts having been chiefly at character and dialogue, I, certainly, have required to be seconded by intelligent actors; and rarely, indeed, in that respect, have I been disappointed. I do not pretend to have rendered the Drama better than I found it, but, I trust, I have not left it worse. Above all—I HAVE NEVER COMMITTED A MELODRAMA.

There; I have done. My Memoirs are to be published! My effigy is to *adorn* the New Monthly! After that, what more can this world afford?—Let me die!

Till then, believe me, my dear Sir,

Very truly your's,

JOHN POOLE.

Anna's Lodge,

Blacknest,

Windsor Forest, Feb. 1831.

THE END.

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